PC ZONE

PC GAMES A-Z

#99 FEB 2001

Z

WORLD EXCLUSIVE PLAYTEST

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The Bitmap Brothers are back

CAPT-ZO

BETA TEST

TRIBES 2
When two teams go to war...

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEWS

SIERRA 2001
Next year's hottest new games

DEFINITIVE REVIEWS

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DELTA FORCE: LAND WARRIOR
BATTLE OF BRITAIN
STARSHIP TROOPERS
STUPID INVADERS
STARPEACE
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• DIABLO II: THE LORD OF DESTRUCTION • WARRIOR KINGS • INDEPENDENCE WAR 2 • HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2

The Fairytale is Over
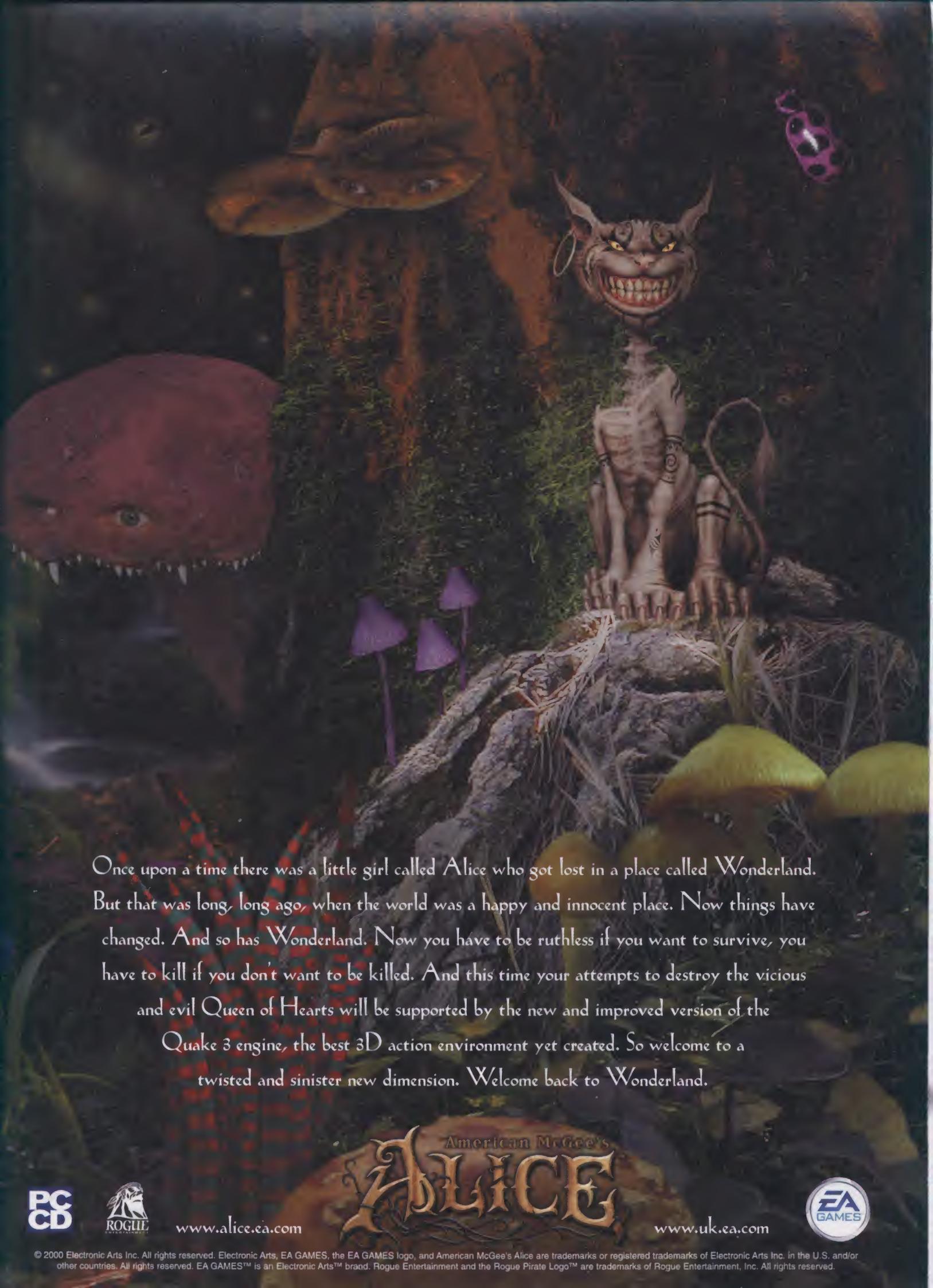
Once upon a time there was a little girl called Alice who got lost in a place called Wonderland.
But that was long, long ago, when the world was a happy and innocent place. Now things have
changed. And so has Wonderland. Now you have to be ruthless if you want to survive, you
have to kill if you don't want to be killed. And this time your attempts to destroy the vicious
and evil Queen of Hearts will be supported by the new and improved version of the
Quake 3 engine, the best 3D action environment yet created. So welcome to a
twisted and sinister new dimension. Welcome back to Wonderland.

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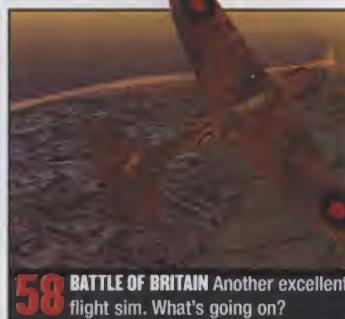
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We take a look at the games we're getting unnaturally excited about

REVIEWS

The most definitive reviews section around. All the latest and greatest PC games (and, of course, some of the worst) come under the cynical *PC ZONE* microscope

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> **"Under the accelerated 3D graphics, *Steel Soldiers* retains the simple ideals that have characterised Bitmap games since the release of *Xenon*"**

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Quite literally the most definitive games news section in the universe

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The most extensive and comprehensive tips section in town

END ZONE

Just when you thought the mag had ended... blimey, a whole lot more!

➲ Turn to page 104 for the latest gadgets, including the cool new and blue Rio 600.

WIN! **THE COMPO NO ONE FINDS** Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some PC goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: **The Compo No One Finds (99), *PC ZONE*, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF** The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The editor's decision is final. Closing date: Thursday February 9, 2001. The winner of our Christmas (#97) cover compo was Terry McKay from London, who wins something from the *ZONE* prizes cupboard for sending in the correct answer to our last little teaser.

THE KING IS DEAD. LONG LIVE THE KING

Well this is it. After three months in charge of the *ZONE* rabble, I've decided that the hat fits and have taken over the role on a permanent basis. Chris Anderson has left for a career as a potter in *EverQuest*, although fans should note that he's still going to play a big part in the magazine, writing in a freelance capacity each and every month. Well, it wouldn't be the same without him.

My task now is to take the magazine onwards and upwards, and the first big milestone comes next issue as we celebrate our centenary. We haven't had the telegram from the Queen yet (the bit about us all being republicans a few issues back was a joke m'am), but we're expecting it to flutter onto our desks any day now. What I can promise you is that our 100th issue is going to be pretty damn special, with a few old faces dropping in to brighten up proceedings. I shall say no more for now.

Remember, if there is anything you

> **In the office we get upwards of 20 people playing games and between us runs the whole gammut of real intelligence**

want to see in the mag, drop onto our forum (www.pczone.co.uk) for a bit of a chinwag. We do look at everything that's posted up, and try to respond when we've got time, even if the posts are downright abusive, like the recent responses to my *No One Lives Forever* review.

I didn't score the game particularly badly (69 per cent), but I did score it down for two main points: lack of AI and the linear level design. One amusingly named reader slagged me for not reviewing the game as a single-player title, and being obsessed with multiplayer games like *Counter-Strike*. This wasn't the case, but it got me thinking. After playing multiplayer games in the *ZONE* office it is hard to go back and face predictable and badly coded artificial intelligence. In the office, we get upwards of 20 people playing games and between us runs the whole gamut of real intelligence.

You get to know how some people play and you always know that Mark will kill you more than you kill him, but the overriding factor is the amazing level of unpredictability. You never know when someone's going to throw a grenade against a wall and blow his team-mates up, or forget how to use a gun, or panic and run away without even bothering to shoot. It's also more satisfying killing someone you know rather than just a collection of pixels.

That's not to say the single-player game is dead, I'm a huge fan of cinematic visions like *Half-Life,* but developers are going to have to be a lot more creative than they are at the moment. Multiplayer gaming gives you the chance to sample what games should be like. Now it's up to the developers to code a realistic single-player experience. I can't wait until it happens.

Dave Woods
Editor

One day all shooters will look like this.

We assume the boats are used to transport the Mongols, but you can put them where you want with the editor.

FEUDAL WARFARE GETS UGLY

IN SUMMARY

The Mongol Invasion is an add-on pack for the critically acclaimed *Shogun*, which earned 93 per cent when we reviewed it last year. Play as either the Japanese protecting their country or the Mongols trying to invade it. A map and scenario editor, new terrains, multiplayer modes and units wrap things up nicely.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Creative Assembly has obviously made a real effort to create a worthy addition to their award-winning strategy game. When something is as near-perfect as *Shogun* was, any suggestions of bettering things like graphics and AI are enough to qualify as a big deal. Richie Shoemaker was seen frothing at the mouth when the new screenshots arrived in the office.

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR – THE MONGOL INVASION

The glistening Samurai armour is ready to get splattered with mud and gore as the barbarian hordes invade *Shogun*

⊙ **THE ART OF WAR** Mark Hill

After a long battle, take your troops to Blackpool for a nice break.

You are advised that in order to successfully bribe this army, an offer of 300 should be made.

YES   NO

The graphics and AI have both been noticeably improved.

In a further quest for realism you can bribe armies to join you. Where's the honour in that, though?

TreesAreTooTight
PressF1ForHelp

Make the maps you've always wanted to play.

Look, the battering of the soldiers' feet now raises clouds of dust. Dust I tell you!

Shogun: Total War completely blew us away with its colossal battles, huge armies slaughtering each other over 3D landscapes and wealth of tactical and strategic choices that put every other RTS up to that date to shame. Fortunately, the game was also a success with the buying public, and now British developer Creative Assembly is working on the first add-on pack.

With a title like *The Mongol Invasion*, there's little left to explain in terms of the historical background. Instead of devising plots to overthrow rival Shoguns, fighting over territory and sending thousands of Japanese soldiers to die by the sword of other Japanese soldiers, you must defend the country against Mongol hordes, lead by Kublai Khan, grandson of the ruthless Genghis. But, of course, you can also control the invaders and have even more fun wrecking the Land of the Rising Sun and

smashing their rigid codes of honour into small pieces with great armies of unwashed barbarians.

If you choose to stay on the Japanese side, you take the role of a 16th-century Daimyo, leading real-life clans to victory. Another mode of play to be included is the *Campaigns Of The Three Unifiers*, where you get to act out the historical battles of three of the greatest Daimyos in

be exact, among which are the Kensai (sword saints), Battlefield Ninja, Korean Auxiliary Infantry and the Mongol Cavalry. There are also new region upgrades and buildings, like the Strategy School where generals are tutored in the teachings of Sun Tzu – author of *The Art Of War,* which has so greatly influenced the game – and new terrains where the battles actually take place (coastal and rocky, to name two).

them together in scenarios to share with other people via the game's website. Quite frankly, there couldn't have been many more features included if we'd sat down and written a wish list of all we'd like to see and do. If this isn't one of the strongest add-on packs ever we'll commit seppuku. And eat our own legs. **PZ**

66 You can control the invaders and enjoy wrecking the Land of the Rising Sun and smashing their rigid codes of honour to pieces with great armies of unwashed barbarians 99

Japanese history (Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu, if you must know).

For once, this sounds like an expansion that offers a completely new style of gameplay rather than the lazy collection of new maps and units we've been treated to with past games. Not that there aren't plenty of new units on offer to back the whole thing up. Six to

If you prefer your games on the Internet, you'll find some new multiplayer maps and modes, including Capture The Flag and Hold Castle. Not only that, you can create your very own maps with the editors included in the pack and weave

◒ Take care not to frighten the horses.

"You see? I told you it was flammable."

WATCH THIS SPACE...

INDEPENDENCE WAR 2

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Particle Systems Ltd
PUBLISHER Infogrames
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Q3 2001
WEBSITE www.independencewar2.com

IN SUMMARY

A space combat sim based in the 24th century, charting the adventures of a space pirate called Cal, who's intent on avenging the death of his father. Set in a dynamic universe, the engine will incorporate Newtonian physics – and while the action won't be as frantic as the likes of *StarLancer*, there'll be plenty of it, including many random encounters. Multiplayer will include Deathmatch options.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

The easy-to-use joystick-operated HUD could open up the genre to those put off by complicated keyboard layouts, while the all new Flux graphics engine makes *IW2* the best looking space combat game yet.

Two hours on a tube, a missed flight, a flat tyre and an idiot taxi driver later, the preview miraculously gets done

● SPACED Martin Korda

⊕ *IW2* will have over a 100 different ship configurations.

Is there anyone hiding in there?

All of your ship's systems will be controllable with just a joystick.

The colossal size of some of the space stations is truly amazing.

And that's for killing daddy, you heartless murderer.

You play Cal, the leader of a pirate organisation, whose whole life is motivated by revenge.

What, with the huge popularity of *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5*, you'd think more developers would be clambering to jump on the space combat sim bandwagon. Of course, this has never been the case, so the most that us sci-fi loving folk can hope for, is that when one does finally come along, it's a good one. And after seeing *Independence War 2* first hand, it looks like we're not about to be disappointed.

Set in the 24th century, the story revolves around an orphan called Cal (that's you that is), who as a boy watches his father be killed by an evil and infamous mercenary, Caleb Maas. Psychologically scarred, he grows up into an angry young man. Wanting revenge at all costs, he becomes the leader of a group of pirates and sets about avenging the death of his father. However, his struggle for retribution eventually contributes to the break out of the second Independence War. It's a common tale.

For the most part, space combat sims can be divided into two categories, the all-out shooter and the intergalactic trader. However, as with more recent releases such as *Tachyon: The Fringe*, *IW2* tries to find a happy medium. While the action is fast and

> **❝ IW2 certainly got me excited, which is incredible considering the mood I was in after the eight hours of travelling I had to endure just to see it ❞**

furious, there'll also be chances to earn upgrades for your ships and choose which organisations you want to work for.

Despite its flirtation with a dynamic and free-form universe, *IW2* will be heavily story driven, with in-game cut-scenes and an occasional spectacular FMV to drive the plot. We've also been promised that there'll be plenty of twists in the storyline, which is always a bonus.

The game's all new Flux graphics engine is the reason behind *IW2*'s gorgeous graphics. Have a quick look at the screenshots and you'll see what I mean. Ships are subject to Newtonian physics, which will make the manoeuvrability of the larger ones totally different to that of lighter and faster spacecraft. From what we've seen so far, the sense of scale is excellent, and the size of some of the freighters and space stations has to be seen to be believed.

While there are only going to be five ship types for you to fly, there'll be more than 100 different ship configurations in all, which means the scope for variety is going to be huge. Upgrades to your vessel will include different weapons and improved defensive and navigational systems.

In order to make the experience more accessible to the masses, Particle Systems has reworked the HUD interface, allowing you to control all of your ship's systems with the eight-way-hat on your joystick. Granted, this sounds pretty clumsy, but it's all very simple, honestly, it is. And fans of the original need not worry either, as the keyboard layout will be almost identical to the first game.

IW2 certainly got me excited, which is incredible considering the mood I was in after the eight hours of travelling I had to endure just to get to see it. Graphically it's stunning and the combat, especially between the larger ships, is some of the best I've witnessed in a space combat sim. With its 40 missions, dynamic universe and intuitive interface, *X: Beyond The Fontier*'s days as top dog of the space combat sim genre may well be numbered. **PCZ**

CORPORATE NIGHTMARE

○ NEWS EDITOR Mark Hill

It's the same old tale we've seen in every big entertainment industry as soon as vast sums of of money become involved. The big fish eat the small fish until you're left with three or four bloated fishes who are so obese they can't even see the pond around them anymore. It happened a while ago with the music and film industries, and it's been happening more and more in the rosy land of computer games. Small publishers are taken over by the likes of Infogrames and Microsoft and independent developers are forced to join big companies in order to survive. There is a simple reason for this. As games get more technologically complex and the things they set out to achieve become more ambitious they get more and more expensive to make. A big title takes anything from two to four years to develop, employing ever-growing numbers of people and absorbing so much money that eventually the banks run dry. The more a game slips – and we all know practically every game slips at some stage of its production – the more it costs. And if publishers have to keep coughing up the cash they want to be in total control; they want to have the final word on all decisions and influence the course of the game in accordance with their marketing strategies. What it means in the end is that developers are restricted and lose much of their creative freedom, unless they've proven themselves with a previous blockbuster. The biggest problem is that unlike in the film industry where independents can create masterpieces on a shoestring budget, it's hard to come up with a game that can compete with the rest unless you spend a lot of money on it. The future lies with the big name talent, such as Warren Spector and Valve, and the ever-rising mod community of bedroom programmers. But since you probably don't care about any of this, go and eat some popcorn.
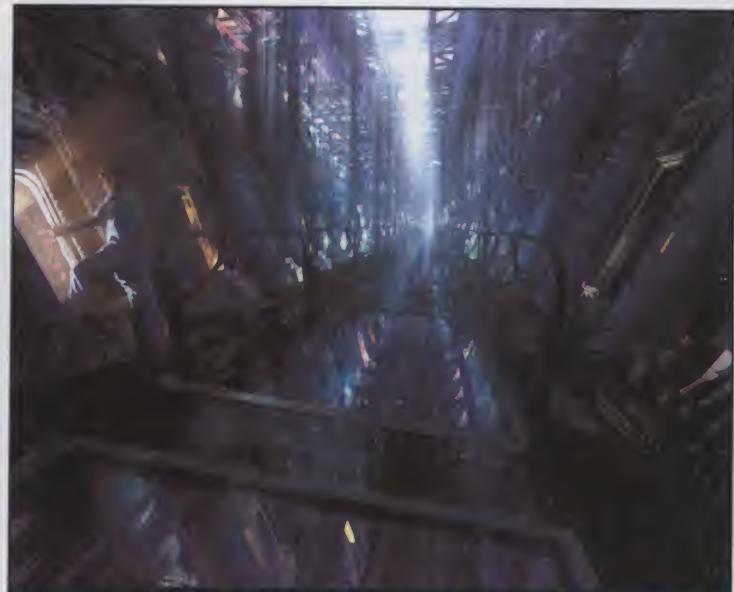
How far will the finished game be from Chris Roberts' original vision?

Could Microsoft's take over have something to do with DA's financial trouble?

There's no denying the fact that it looks absolutely incredible.

SLAVELANCER

Roberts goes freelance as Microsoft buys Digital Anvil

The future of *Freelancer*, one of the most ambitious and eagerly anticipated titles currently in production, was thrown into turmoil when Digital Anvil co-founder and legendary space sim-meister Chris Roberts decided to leave the company, immediately sparking rumours of the game's cancellation. The man behind the *Wing Commander* and *Privateer* series was said to have realised that his vision of the game was not possible with today's technology (everyone's favourite excuse it seems).

For those of you who don't know, *Freelancer* is a free-form space sim that takes *Elite* and *Privateer* into a whole other dimension with the introduction of deep RPG features and a revolutionary mouse-driven control system. The game was hailed as a certain masterpiece by those lucky enough to see it running at 1999's E3,

and the impressive screenshots quickly convinced everyone else.

In an effort to appear to be saving the day, Microsoft gobbled up the company to add to its ever-growing portfolio of developers, although negotiations had already been going on for several months. Since Erin Roberts, Chris's brother, is working on an Xbox title, it could well be that Microsoft will be using the company to develop titles exclusively for its console.

Development on *Freelancer* will continue, with Chris acting as a creative consultant before taking time off to work out where he wants to go from here. He'll also be shopping around for a publisher for *Conquest: Frontier Wars* – which had already been cancelled – and *Loose Cannon* – which has been in development longer than anyone cares to remember.

IT CAME FROM THE DESERT

Conflict Desert Storm

For a war that had the whole of the western world glued to news channels 24 hours a day almost ten years ago, the Gulf War never managed to take over the public's imagination in the form of fiction. But to the handful of films and books based on the conflict, we can now add *Desert Storm*, a 3D squad-based military action game being developed by Pivotal Studios and to be published by SCI. Although almost no details have been released it seems to belong squarely in the long line of tactical shooters such as *Hidden & Dangerous*, *Rogue Spear* and *Delta Force*, with more than a hint of *Counter-Strike* influence. We know so little at the moment that

all we can do is speculate. What we can promise is that there will be plenty of sand around and a strong multiplayer aspect. Pivotal Games might be a new name on the scene but the company is made up of members of the now defunct Pumpkin Studios, creator of *Warzone 2100*, which means they really know how to turn war into a fun game. The technology developed to create *Desert Storm* is also being used for the next generation console game of *The Great Escape*, which begs the question: why isn't the classic film's adaptation coming out on PC? As soon as we've got any concrete details on *Desert Storm* we might tell you all about it. Then again, maybe we won't.

What's that, an extendable rifle?

"Anyone got any Factor 200 sun lotion?"

If you survive, chances are you'll develop Gulf War Syndrome.

Looks remarkably like *Counter-Strike*'s Scud map.

OBI-WAN STILL ON THE DARK SIDE

LucasArts refuses to bow down to pressure from PC gamers

Almost 6,300 people have signed their name to the petition to bring *Obi Wan* back to the PC, but LucasArts is insisting the game will only appear on console formats. It's becoming increasingly obvious that the real reason it was cancelled on PC was because LucasArts realised it had a very average game on its hands that was sure to disappoint everyone. How else would you interpret their statement that it didn't meet "the company's recently heightened quality standards"? It's obvious it didn't want another *Force Commander* on its hands when most people were expecting something that could sit along proudly in their collection alongside *Dark Forces* and *Jedi Knight*. Instead of threatening LucasArts with evil spells and signing petitions, *Star Wars* fans should probably be thanking them for being spared from another *Daikatana*, or at least a superficial console game. Hopefully, "the company's recently heightened quality standards" should bring us a Jedi game worth playing sometime in the near future. As for *Obi Wan*, we can consider it a closed case.

We're always complaining when shallow console games make it to the PC. Not with this one we won't.
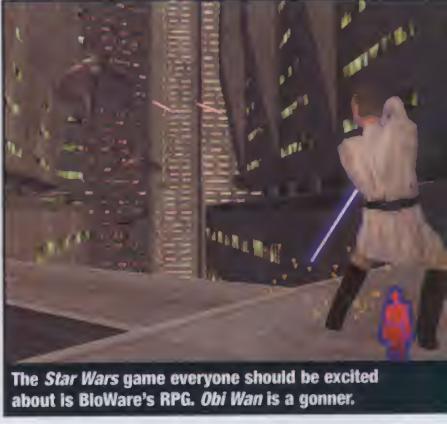
The *Star Wars* game everyone should be excited about is BioWare's RPG. *Obi Wan* is a gonner.

TECH HEAD

The latest graphics software, a tiny PC and some neat new hardware

☼ **WORDS** Carlos Ruiz

NVIDIA DIRECT THE X

The delayed DirectX 8.0 is out at last, with help from NVIDIA

With every new version of DirectX, the industry-standard graphics API software, comes a wave of new opportunities for games developers and further potential for mind-blowing visuals and sounds on the PC. DirectX 8.0 has been a long time coming, not least because delays meant that it couldn't ship at the same time as Microsoft's flagship home operating system, Windows Millennium Edition. However, now that it's finally here, gamers the world over can begin to appreciate and reap the benefits that the software offers.

In contrast to the early days, where dominance in the 3D-card market was based on the level of compatibility offered with the latest games, Microsoft now works actively with all the major graphics vendors to ensure the most natural progression of technology. The most notable contributor of late has been NVIDIA, who licensed several key 3D features for use in the new software.

Look forward to mind-blowing visuals.

NVIDIA also researched and helped define some significant aspects of DirectX 8, including the new programmable pixel shaders, vertex shaders and the implementation of higher-order surfaces. These features allow software content creators to use more elaborate artwork and flexible 3D rendering techniques in their applications and games.

"NVIDIA's goal is to advance the state of the art in graphics technology," says Jen-Hsun Huang, president and CEO of NVIDIA. "DirectX 8.0 will enable stunning experiences on Windows and will become the industry standard for graphics and multimedia. Our cooperation with

Microsoft will drive rapid adoption of these NVIDIA graphics innovations by making them standard on Microsoft platforms industry-wide."

"As a result of these new features, DirectX 8.0 will enable a new level of 3D graphics applications, bringing new 3D rendering and shading techniques to life," says Chris Jones, vice president of the Windows Client Division at Microsoft. "NVIDIA has been a great help in developing DirectX 8.0 as it is a leader in graphics technology."

This latest collaboration is part of an ongoing relationship between the two companies, aimed at sharing talent and research findings to develop an increasingly lifelike interactive 3D experience for gamers. Other activities include co-training of Microsoft DirectX developers, and development of two key processors, the Media Communications Processor (MCP) and Graphics Processing Unit (GPU), both for use in Microsoft's highly anticipated Xbox.

FACT CANNON

☼ AMD (www.amd.com) has developed a substance that is reportedly much more effective in absorbing and dispersing heat than typical ceramic materials. It has been used alongside a simple passive heatsink to cool a brand new 1.5GHz Palomino chip, which is an impressive feat – although it should be noted that the CPU in question was manufactured with the latest aluminum interconnects.

☼ Microsoft's new Trackball Explorer takes full advantage of the latest optical laser technology, doing away with gunk-collecting movement sensors and ensuring that no regular cleaning is needed. There are four programmable buttons and a mouse wheel placed by the thumb, and the device connects via USB or PS/2.

☼ Pioneer has announced that its latest CD/DVD combo drive, out in early 2001, will read and write CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R and DVD-RW formats. Writing speeds are 8x, 4x, 2x and 1x respectively, and everything conforms to the most supported specifications on the market, so DVD-R discs will work on regular DVD players and DVD-ROM drives. See www.pioneerusa.com for more details.

☼ Microsoft has contracted Seagate to produce the 8Gb hard drives that will come as standard in each Xbox. This is in addition to the agreement with Western Digital, suggesting that backup companies are being used in case of production problems. Also, high-volume RAM producer Micron will be turning out DDR SDRAM chips for the console.

☼ In a temporary departure from ultra-realistic flight controllers, Thrustmaster (www.thrustmaster.com) has decided to cater for the science fiction fan with its new AfterBurner joystick/throttle combo. The unit is detachable, but only ever requires one USB port, while the eight buttons are infinitely programmable. An eight-way view hat, 'arm weapons' flip cover and two forms of rudder control round off the package.

MATCHBOX PC ON FORM

Introducing the world's smallest standard-function PC

The MPC, or Matchbox PC, is officially the world's smallest computer that can run everyday operating systems such as Windows and Linux, as well as most of the corresponding applications. All the essential components of a working computer are packed down into an insanely small package, measuring five cubic inches and weighing just 3.3oz, which still manages to perform the vast majority of the functions expected of a full size system.

With the addition of a Lithium-Ion battery and port expander the MPC gains valuable hours of portable power, as well as being able to output display to a monitor/video projector,

A 340Mb hard drive is massive, when you put it all in perspective.

surf the Net and plenty of other things. Supported resolutions are either 800x600 or 1024x768, but browsing the web can only be done in basic 8-bit colour.

These possibilities make for a great executive toy and superb bragging rights, but for the majority of normal folk, act as a showpiece for things to come in the near future. It is currently available from TIQIT (Tiny Ubiquitous Technology) for prompt delivery at the hefty price of US$1,500, but it's only a matter of time before you'll be able to put similar gadgets on your Christmas list without breaking the bank. See www.tiqit.com for more details.

If God created all men equal, how will you get the upper hand?

EAT DIRT BIGHTAKE COVER
YOU'RE MINE
RETURN
BANK LEF FOLLOW M
COVER ME
QUICK, TAKE COVER
LET'S GET OUTTA HER
SPEAK YOUR MIND

MICROSOFT
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GAME VOICE

For the ultimate PC gaming experience, SideWinder® Game Voice is the most revolutionary device in voice chat and voice command. Link up with your on-line friends quickly and easily, then plot your revenge on enemies, taunt your opponents, discuss the latest gaming tactics, manage your teams more efficiently and shout your winning elation. Want to carry out gaming commands without taking your finger off the pulse? Then just say the word and the game will carry out your instructions, so no more complex keyboard commands. **Isn't it time you made yourself heard?**

www.gamevoice.co.uk **Microsoft**

QUAKE UK KINGS

A report from the UK qualifiers for the *Quake III* tournament

Sunday December 3 saw London's Playing Fields once again host the PC ZONE/AMD UK Qualifier for the £100,000 CPL *Quake III* Arena Tournament in Dallas, and unlike previous events, laid claim to be the UK's first full pro games tournament – each of the 64 entrants winning cash prizes.

As with previous events, it was a tense 14-hour affair between the UK's finest, with initial free-for-all stages seeding the entrants, followed by a series of one-on-one deathmatches to find a winner. Very much a two horse race, pre-tournament fave - UNR-Timber and clan mate –UNR-Bl0key faced off in a close match, Timber sending Bl0key into the lower bracket through which he had to fight back to claim a rematch in the final, which he bravely lost. Timber went away with a place in the £100,000 CPL Tournament, flights, accommodation and £750 spending money, with Bl0key winning marginally less. At the time of writing, both the entrants, plus Sujoy Roy – one of the UK's few full-time pro gamers – were in Dallas ready for battle to commence. See how they got on next month when we will have full details of the event. If you can't wait, check out www.theplayingfields.co.uk.

Good job there was a McDs round the corner.

Duelling for a flight to Texas.

The big fight for all to see.

BLED TO DEATH

BBC games programme cancelled

A few issues ago we brought you a report about *Bleeding Thumbs*, a new videogames show which was to be screened on the BBC in a primetime slot. Since then, the Beeb – whose new head has expressed her commitment to bring big-audience trashy shows like *Big Brother* to the channel – has decided to flush it. The show had been in development for more than a year and a pilot episode had already been completed, so the decision to can it has come a bit late and as a complete shock to the production team. There goes your chance of seeing a multiplayer shoot 'em up based on *Unreal Tournament* on TV then.

It's thumbs down from the BBC to a computer games show.

Not on a TV near you.

ZONE UNDER FIRE

In issue 96, we published a news piece about a game called *Kingdom Under Fire* from the developer Phantagram Limited. In this, we referred to the fact that the press release was difficult to understand because the developer was Korean. Although this was meant to be light-hearted, we appreciate that some of the wording was regrettable and could be construed as offensive. We wish to state that there was no intention whatsoever on our part to disparage or offend the Korean race and we would like to apologise for any offence that was caused.

WIN!

WIN A FULL MONTY MILITARY TANK DRIVING DAY!

Sudden Strike publisher CDV is sending one lucky PC ZONE reader on a day out driving tanks, plus plenty of goodies for five runner-ups

A fter breathing new life into both the battered old real-time strategy genre and World War II games, Sudden Strike now gives you the opportunity to experience war first-hand.

It's all very well clicking on a group of tanks and sending them off to blow up a small town, but wouldn't you rather sit in one yourself? The bitter taste of gunpowder in your mouth, the sweat dripping off your forehead, the smell of fear from your enemies. OK, maybe you'll have to imagine that last one yourself, but you'll never forget the sense of power as you drive a Ferret-

armoured car, an Armoured Personnel Carrier and Abbot tank, a Rapier rocket carrier and a Lance troop carrier over a specially developed SAS-style course. If that isn't enough, the day out includes the issue of camouflage suits and helmets as well as a weapon demonstration, clay-pigeon shooting and lunch — yes, lunch. As a further incentive, the person who gets chosen Driver of the Day will get to run over and crush a family saloon car in a mighty Chieftain tank.

Five runner-ups will each win a set of Sudden Strike goodies, including a copy of the game, a strategy guide, posters, mugs and more.

THE QUESTION

To win, all you need to do is answer the following question. A doddle for any tank experts:

Which of the following tanks isn't an armoured military vehicle moved by caterpillar wheels and used to maim and destroy enemy armies in war situations?

1 The Centurion

2 The StuG III

3 The Firefly

4 The Tropical Fish Tank

5 The T-34

6 The Sherman 75

7 The Panzer Mk V

8 The Cromwell

Just send your answer on a postcard, along with all the information requested, to the address below.

✪ Title, forename, surname, address, postcode, daytime phone number and your email address.
✪ Please indicate on the postcard if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers from companies other than Dennis Publishing Ltd.
✪ Please indicate on the postcard if you are under 18 years of age.
✪ Please indicate on the postcard if you are you a current subscriber to PC ZONE.
Send your entry to: Sudden Strike Competition (CPCZ0201A), PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154 Bradford, BD1 5RZ. (Closing date: February 8, 2001)
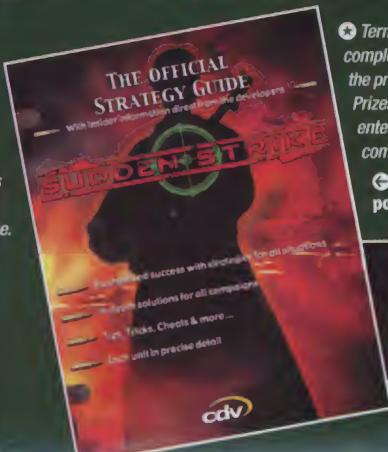
THE OFFICIAL STRATEGY GUIDE

✪ Terms and conditions: Only entries with all the questions completed and received before the closing date will be entered into the prize draw. Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. And all that.

↩ Runners up will receive a Strategy Guide, posters amd a copy of the game.

SUDDEN STRIKE

cdv

BIO-STRIKE

Biological warfare is still a mostly untapped area of gaming, but Red Storm is remedying the situation with *Bio-Strike*, a strategy game that puts you at the head of a powerful genetics research lab. Rather than trying to come up with ways of wiping out the whole human race with nasty bacteria, your job is to stop a lethal virus and find out who's behind it. Don't expect to see it until late summer.

Europa Universalis: risky business.

EUROPE AT RISK

In what sounds very much like a real-time version of *Risk*, 'Europa Universalis recreates world events from 1492 to 1792. You control one of the major European powers (Spain, England, Prussia...) attempting to conquer every map in sight. Religion, technological advances and politics all play an important part in the campaigns, but you'll also need to explore new lands and stage wars on those who oppose you. Developed by SFI, *Europa Universalis* is set to be published by Infogrames in the coming months.

MYSTERY GAME

Developer Digital Soapbox (www.digital-soapbox.com) is trying to stir some interest in its new title by refusing to give many details on it and encouraging the press to call it The Mystery Game. What we do know about the project is that it's an adventure game (the website proclaims: "adventure games are not dead, they're just regrouping") that combines puzzle solving and some action. The engine will be 3D and the story is apparently being written by a secret, award-winning famous author. If the as-yet unnamed game lives up to the hype, it could be one to watch out for.
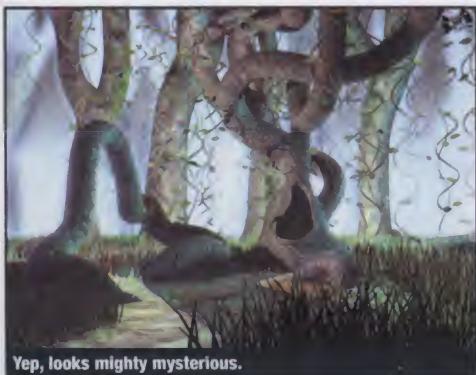
Yep, looks mighty mysterious.
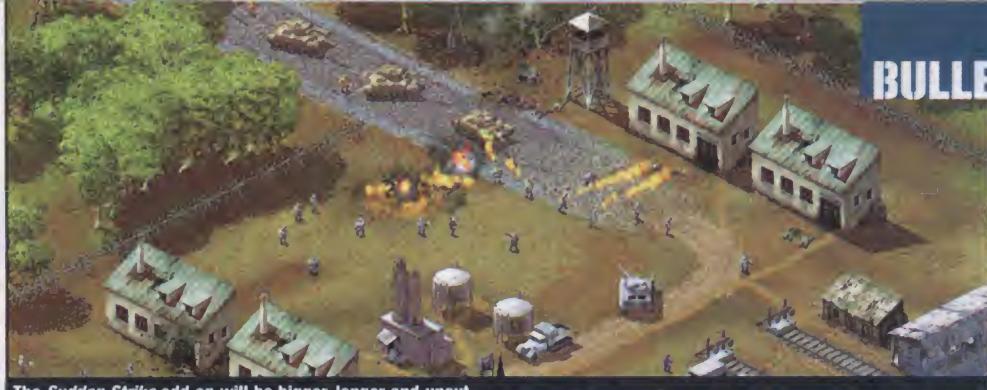
The *Sudden Strike* add on will be bigger, longer and uncut.

SUDDEN EXPANSION

CDV's World War II RTS *Sudden Strike* is to receive its first expansion pack. As is often the case with these things, there will be new units, new missions and new scenarios. More unusually, the expansion will blend in with the original game rather than work as a separate entity. The most exciting feature is the mission editor, which will enable users to upload their levels for everyone else to play. Should be out around March or April.

CRIMSON ORDER

Aliens, tactics, isometric perspective? Did someone say XCOM?

⬆ That cattle prod looks dangerous.

Crimson Order will attempt to recapture the old tactical glory days of XCOM: Apocalypse.

A real-time third-person tactical strategy in a 3D environment, *Crimson Order* uses an *XCOM: Apocalypse* style of viewpoint that stresses the importance of gameplay without necessarily giving up on the graphics. The story isn't particularly original, concerning as it does yet another alien invasion of human colonies in the 26th century. The aliens, called the Tan'Khar, have been driven out from their own planet by a holy war and enlist the help of human traitors to govern the colonies. Your role, as the superbly named Mark Prophet, is to lead the resistance movement – the Terran Intelligence – and free all the colonies. Texan developer Kinesoft has put a lot of work into the background to ensure the game is set in a believable universe, from the political and historical backdrop to the attention to detail of every object and weapon.

Missions can be completed in several different ways and, while you only ever directly control Mr Prophet, you can have up to two other characters on your team whom you can order around. These other rebels will each have their own skills (which improve over time) and personalities, and will come out of a pool of fighters, much in the same way as *Apocalypse*. The number of people you can choose from will increase as you play the game, with rescued prisoners and travellers joining your cause and making the team selection much more of a strategic headache. Although *Crimson Order* is scheduled for release early this year, it will have to wait until a publisher picks it up. Kinesoft's website is **www.kinesoft.com**, funnily enough.

Mark Prophet: What a guy.

The courses have been designed for a maximum sense of speed.

Grin Inc claims to have made the game in only six months.

RACE TO THE FUTURE

Go ballistic for the latest high-octane racing game

The PC's relationship with futuristic racing games in the *Wipeout* vein has been less than successful over the years, producing a string of second-rate titles full of claims of 1,000mph accelerations and none of the sense of speed. Swedish developer Grin Inc hopes to rectify the situation with *Ballistics*, a game they have already finished producing, that promises all the high-octane racing thrills you could want. Set in the equivalent of the *Formula One* competition in an unspecified future, *Ballistics* sets out to make the most of current technologies and squeezes your jazzy 3D card for all its worth, offering speeds of over 1200kmph. Unfortunately, you won't be seeing it until a publisher snaps it up which, if the game lives up to expectations, should be in no time at all. Keep your eye on developments at **www.grin.se**.

MANIC MINE ORE

A mining game set in space? That's *Dark Ore* for you

If Mucky Foot's forthcoming *Startopia* is *Theme Hospital* on a space station, then RayLogic's *Dark Ore* sounds a bit like *Theme Park* on a space station. Set in the future (well, it would have to be unless it was a Mir simulator) at a time when previously unknown elements have been discovered in deep space and sparked a race to mine the substances for use by the computer companies, *Dark Ore* puts you at the head of one of the mining companies. The demand for the new material is enormous back on Earth so competition is fierce, to the point of savage wars among the companies who attempt to sabotage and pillage each other's facilities. As a result, the game is split into two parts, the real-time space station building and management and the first-person space combat, one to develop your company and make a profit, the other to protect your investment. Balancing the mining process, buying defensive and offensive weapons on the black market and hiring mercenary fighter ships to help you out should make for some interesting gameplay. *Dark Ore* should be ready by next Spring. Check out **www.raylogic.com**

Surely blowing these things up is more fun than building them?

It'll be turned into a convict facility at some stage. Haven't they seen *Alien 3*?

SUITS YOU SIR

Big robots make a comeback with Battlesuit MK1

We've always been a bit curious as to who, if anybody, actually plays giant robot games, although the genre certainly seems to have its fans over the pond. Thankfully *Battlesuit MK1* is aiming for a bigger audience anyway, and Developer Savage Entertainment (www.savageentertainment.com) is made up of the people who developed *MechWarrior 2* and the *Heavy Gear* series, so there's no doubting their credentials. But while those titles have always been criticised by action gamers for being too slow, the team is aiming to make *Battlesuit* more of a robotic first-person shooter with some tactical elements, mentioning *Tribes* as one the main influences. Like *Tribes*, there is a very heavy leaning towards the multiplayer aspect and, from what we can gather, the single-player experience will be quite limited. On the upside you'll be able to develop and upgrade your bot in an almost RPG fashion, choosing the armour and weapons to suit your needs. The engine has been created specifically for the game and goes by the name of Sabertooth. In fact, it's looking so impressive that a few other developers have expressed an interest in using it. Now all we need is for a publisher to show the same interest and put the game on the shelves.

Old civilisations are a big part of the game. Just don't mention Daikatana.

MAN FROM ATLANTICA

Myths and FPS meet again in Atlantica

The talent behind *Hidden & Dangerous* has been working on what could be one of the most interesting first-person shooters to appear for a long time. Developer Lonely Cat, made up of members who broke away from the *H&D* team, are using an enhanced version of the Insanity Engine to create a very different vision to the Nazi-populated World War II scenarios of their previous game. In *Atlantica* you play the role of a hero from the mythical city of Atlantis, travelling to distant planets and presumably shooting anything that appears in front of you. Each of the worlds is different in size and environment and, if *Hidden & Dangerous* is anything to go by, it should mean very big levels full of surprises. The multiplayer mode seems pretty standard, and includes deathmatch, capture the flag and cooperative missions. Since Lonely Cat was only set up last August, *Atlantica* is still in its embryonic stages and could well be into development until the end of the year. If these early screenshots are anything to go by, it shouldn't have any problem finding a publisher or, indeed, a massive playing audience.

Quake III Arena with big robots? Could be.

Savage Entertainment are self-confessed Shogo fans.

Each of the worlds that you travel to is very different in size and environment.

The Sabretooth engine could be making a big splash.

CHARTS

Everything you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload. Plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what's hot and what's not

It's good to see an adventure game making it into the charts.

THE *Virgin* megastores TOP 10

DEC	JAN	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	GUNMAN CHRONICLES	REWOLF	HAVAS	87%
1	2	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 00/01	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	93%
2	3	C&C: RED ALERT 2	WESTWOOD	EA	82%
NE	4	DEUS EX	ION STORM	EIDOS	94%
NE	5	PROJECT IGI	INTERLOOP	EIDOS	85%
4	6	ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND	LUCASARTS	ACTIVISION	82%
NE	7	HITMAN: CODENAME 47	IO INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	85%
7	8	FIFA 2001	EA SPORTS	EA	83%
NE	9	NO ONE LIVES FOREVER	MONOLITH	EA	68%
10	10	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%

THE ChartTrack TOP10 ELSPA

DEC	JAN	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
2	1	WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE	HOTHOUSE	EIDOS	62%
1	2	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 00/01	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	93%
6	3	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
3	4	C&C: RED ALERT 2	WESTWOOD	EA	82%
NE	5	ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND	LUCASARTS	ACTIVISION	82%
7	6	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%
NE	7	TOMB RAIDER CHRONICLES	CORE	EIDOS	72%
4	8	FIFA 2001	EA SPORTS	EA	83%
NE	9	HITMAN: CODENAME 47	IO INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	85%
NE	10	B-17: FLYING FORTRESS	MICROPROSE	HASBRO	87%

(Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA 2000)

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

"*Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*? I can understand people wanting to play it on TV – and maybe actually win something. But buying the damn thing? How long are people planning on playing it? For a month? Weeks? Imagine playing it: you answer questions, ask your virtual friend, the virtual audience. That would be exciting... for five minutes. Excuse my rantings, but someone who goes into a computer shop and is faced with all those great games and still picks *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* must be retarded, or least mentally confused."

Big Green Jim

"I remember the days when *FIFA* stormed in at number one and stayed there – or there abouts – until the next one came out a couple of months later. Are PC gamers wising up to the fact that they only need one version? It seems *Champ Man* fans won't give up, though. Has anyone thought that the way these games keep coming up every so often with small changes to make you part with your money is exactly the same as the way football clubs keep changing their kits every five minutes. And always in time for Christmas. Funny that."

Al Thompson, Croydon

"At last, a proper adventure game in the charts. It's moments like these that make all the waiting worthwhile. Having completed *Grim Fandango* twice and all the old classics about five times, having some fresh puzzles to solve was like being in paradise. And no one can touch LucasArts when it comes to funny jokes and good voice acting. Let's hope we see more of them."

Norman Jenkins, Bradford

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEAR AGO...
1 Age Of Empires II: Age of Kings *(Microsoft)*
2 FIFA 2000 *(EA)*
3 Theme Park World *(EA)*
4 MS Flight Sim 2000 *(Microsoft)*
5 FA Premier League Manager 2000 *(EA)*

2 YEARS AGO...
1 FA Premier League Manager 99 *(EA)*
2 Grim Fandango *(Activision)*
3 Carmageddon 2 *(SCI)*
4 Caesar III *(Sierra)*
5 Railroad Tycoon II *(Take 2)*

5 YEARS AGO...
1 Hexen *(GT Interactive)*
2 Command & Conquer *(Virgin)*
3 Championship Manager 2 *(Domark)*
4 Rebel Assault *(Virgin)*
5 Ascendancy *(Gremlin)*

PCZONE READER

After another year of listening to us harping on about what's good and what's absolute crud, the collective voice of the *ZONE* readership is about to be heard. Prepare yourselves...

T here's something vaguely sordid about awards, whatever their scale or subject matter. And they are rarely ever starry affairs, as you would expect. If they're chosen by a panel of experts – usually boring old farts or media politicians with a serious case of talent-blindness – they're accused of being elitist and out of touch. If they're chosen by popular vote, there's a cynical sneer that such lowest common denominator dribble could even be taken seriously. Such is the case with big book, film and music awards. There's only one refuge where awards can still be taken at face value, as the genuine choice of a knowledgeable public with no allegiances other than their own opinions, and that is reader votes in the specialised press. And if you're talking about computer games, that can only mean the *PC ZONE* Reader Awards. Right, now that we've made you feel special and hopefully induced a

warm glow inside you, rip the bleeding form off the page and send us your votes, you ill-informed rabble.

Before you do, take a moment to think about each of the categories and which games really deserve to be crowned. Of course, categories are always hateful and soul-destroyingly restrictive, but you'll probably agree that they're a necessary evil. A game like *Deus Ex* (about which we've been ranting and raving with annoying regularity) could easily have gone into the First-Person Action or Action/Adventure categories but, in an attempt to pin it down into an easy tick-the-box format, we've had to settle for Role Playing. There are a few other titles with the same problem, which is why we've included a few suggestions to guide you. However, this is also the chance for you to point out games you might think we've criminally ignored over the past year. But, hey, it's all a matter of opinion anyway...

AWARDS 2000

VOTE NOW!

CATEGORIES

BEST FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
Star Trek: Voyager, Gunman Chronicles, KISS Psycho Circus, Project IGI, Thief II

BEST STRATEGY GAME
Shogun: Total War, Ground Control, Red Alert 2, Earth 2150, Sudden Strike, Homeworld: Cataclysm, Call To Power II, The Sims

BEST RPG
Deus Ex, Vampire: The Masquerade, Planescape: Torment, Baldur's Gate II, Diablo II, Icewind Dale

BEST ACTION/ADVENTURE
Escape From Monkey Island, Hitman, Rune, Severance: Blade Of Darkness, Giants

BEST DRIVING GAME
Colin McRae 2.0, Midtown Madness 2, Grand Prix 3, Insane, F1 Championship 2000

BEST SIMULATION
B-17 Flying Fortress: The Mighty Eighth, Combat Flight Sim 2, Comanche Hokum, StarLancer, Terminus

BEST SPORTS GAME
Tony Hawk's 2, Championship Manager 00/01, FIFA 2001, PGA Championship Golf 2000, Open Tennis 2000

BEST ONLINE GAME
Counter-Strike, EverQuest: The Ruins of Kunark, Ultima Online: Renaissance, Allegiance, Starpeace

GAME OF THE YEAR
Deus Ex, Championship Manager 00/01, The Sims, Shogun: Total War, Planescape: Torment, Tony Hawk's 2, Star Trek: Voyager, Baldur's Gate II

BEST PUBLISHER
Eidos Interactive, Activision, Electronic Arts, Havas Interactive, Infogrames, Take 2 Interactive, Microsoft, Codemasters

BEST DEVELOPER
Creative Assembly, Ion Storm, BioWare, Sports Interactive

BEST USE OF GRAPHICS
Severance: Blade Of Darkness, Sacrifice, Vampire, Rune, Alice, Giants

BEST USE OF SOUND
Escape From Monkey Island, Deus Ex, Sacrifice, Tony Hawk's 2, Shogun: Total War, Thief II

MOST ORIGINAL GAME
Deus Ex, The Sims, Giants, Shogun, Counter-Strike

Remember, these are only suggestions and you can nominate any game you like as long as it was released in the year 2000.

SO WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

Yes, you can win something, if you can be bothered…

We know how lazy you lot are, and how much effort it actually takes to get a pen out and write real words down on a form, take a pair of scissors, put the piece of paper in an envelope and walk to your nearest post box. And we won't even mention the cost of the second-class stamp. So, to sweeten the bitter pill of these exertions, we are filling a large warehouse with goodies we're begging, stealing and borrowing from those nice people at the games publishing houses. The winners will be picked out at random and the selection of prizes on offer will be detailed nearer the time.
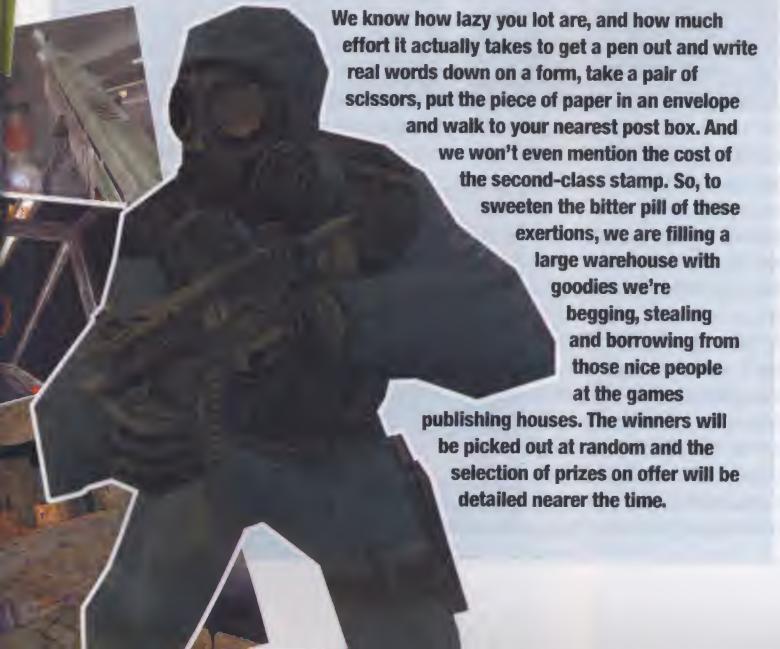
PCZONE READER AWARDS 2001 VOTING FORM

BEST FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

BEST STRATEGY GAME

BEST ROLE-PLAYING GAME

BEST ACTION/ADVENTURE GAME

BEST DRIVING GAME

BEST SIMULATION

BEST SPORTS GAME

BEST ONLINE GAME

GAME OF THE YEAR

BEST PUBLISHER

BEST DEVELOPER

BEST USE OF GRAPHICS

BEST USE OF SOUND

MOST ORIGINAL GAME

Name:

Job Title:

Address:

Postcode: Daytime Telephone:

☐ Please tick if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies

☐ Please tick if under 18 years of age

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: Entries with all nominations filled out correctly will be entered into the prize draw and winners will be selected at random after the closing date. The editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into and all winners will be notified by post. This competition is not open to employees of Dennis Publishing or any other companies associated with the Awards. Only one entry per reader. No cash alternatives will be offered. Submission of entry will be taken as acceptance of these rules.

SEND YOUR VOTES TO: Helen Cribb, *PC ZONE*, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF.

All nominations must reach us by March 16, so please start sending them in right away. A photocopy of the voting form or a postcard are fine if you don't want to cut up your copy of the mag, just don't forget to include all the details required. Either this, or you can vote via the website, or through the email we send to you if you are already registered on the site.

SHOGUNS BLAZING

More feudal Japanese strategy in *Takeda*

Modern Japan is undoubtedly the greatest source of high-tech console games, but it seems it's western PC developers who are fascinated with their past. Following the success of *Shogun: Total War*, Canadian team Magitech is working on *Takeda*, an RTS set in 16th century Japan. Your role is as the title character Takeda Shingen, a legendary warlord considered to be one of the greatest tacticians of all time. Set in The Age of Strife, when the whole nation is being destroyed by internal conflict, your goal is to unite the country, wiping out the opposition in order to bring peace. Like *Shogun*, *Takeda* leaves behind resource management and individual unit control to concentrate on big formations and intelligent

tactics. Magitech is working hard to make the AI a formidable enemy, and it will use flanking attacks, reactive detachments and will even reorganise its defence in response to your attacks. Your own officers will have advanced AI too, with each one behaving in accordance to an individual personality that can change as events in the game unfold. Taking another leaf out of the *Total War* book, your units' behaviour is also affected by their fatigue and morale ratings. It all sounds well and good, but you can't help feeling that the lack of a 3D engine, the flatness of the graphics and the small number of units when compared to *Shogun* will make it pale in comparison to Creative Assembly's masterpiece. No publisher or release date have been announced as yet.

Villages and castles have been designed from real historical blueprints.

Formations and terrain advantage are all-important in battle.

We'll soak the earth with their blood!!!

Getting trampled to death won't help their morale.

The Man who KNOWS

TITS AND ARSE

Lara Croft's breasts are the same size as they have always been, a contrived PR story has claimed. **Core Design's Susie Hamilton** announced: "It's an optical illusion. We don't need to make her chest any bigger – she's fine as she is. She's generally more defined. It's not just her boobs." According to head of global development, **Jeremy Heath-Smith**: "They have not got more extreme. We have defined and smoothed them and made them more whole." He also claimed: "For the new *Tomb Raider Chronicles* game, it is the first time she has had a proper bum." Now that I'd like to see.

Milla Jovovich has been cast in *Resident Evil: Ground Zero*, the film version of the popular zombie 'em up. It's another in a long line of video games to be converted to the silver screen, and apparently **Hollywood** has labelled the phenomenon "gamania," cleverly combining the words "game" and "mania". Further evidence of the disturbing trend is offered by the announcement of a film version of **American McGee's Alice**. A spokesman said: "The long-standing rumours can now be confirmed. *American McGee's Alice* is headed to the big screen." And if that isn't bad enough, Kalisto has announced that a movie based on the largely forgettable **Nightmare Creatures** will soon be underway. Set to be directed by Ralph Zondag of **Dinosaur** fame, the adaptation will be handled by Matt Cirulnick, who recently completed three projects for Dimension films, namely **Paid in Full, Total Recall 2** and **Hell Hole.** Three words: straight to video.

Star Trek gimps are frothing with excitement at the news of some pointless gimmick. The publisher of **Star Trek: DS9 – The Fallen** has announced gamers will be able to receive clues and cheat codes via web-enabled mobile phones. **Simon & Schuster Interactive** vice president, **Peter von Schlossberg**, says he wants users to view their mobile phones as "communicators". Oh dear.

Giants: Citizen Kabuto, has been radically altered, with the key elements of blood and breasts being removed. Originally topless female character, **Delphi**, will now be clothed, while all the blood in the game has been changed from red to green. According to publisher, **Interplay**, the changes were instigated "to make the game available to a wider audience," namely people who don't like breasts and believe blood is green.

And finally, boffins are claiming a good night's sleep can improve gaming skills. Apparently, a bit of kip helps in mastering highly visual procedural learning, and according to **Science News** magazine, studies showed that "people who practised a task that demands quick visual processing performed it better on ensuing trials if they were first allowed to get some sleep." Goodnight.

GREAT GAMING CLICHÉS

We expose yet another of the gaming industry's worst crimes in the field of the cliché

#3 IF YOU'RE A FAN OF GENRE

"Nonspecific sci-fi RTS number 72 doesn't do anything new, has average graphics and an average story. But if you're a fan of the genre you'd do well to check it out."

"Quite possibly the worst game we've ever played, and we would only recommend it to fans of the genre."

Isn't it about time we got over this obsession with genres? They serve a useful purpose to a certain point, but does everything always have to be categorised so neatly? Sure, it helps marketing departments sell the games to the people on the street, but that's what ads are for, not bloody games magazines.

Game reviewers like nothing better than to cover their backs. Whether it's because they might be wrong, because they might not have played the game as much as they should have or because they read a reviewing manual and are following it point-by-point, the fact is that they feel safe adding a clause towards the end of the review expiating them from all responsibility. There's that and also the fact that it's the easiest, laziest way of ending

when you can't think of anything else to say. The other possibility is that they're all closet logicians: If X equals Y and you equal Z, then buy the game and Bob's your uncle.

Just take a look at What Our Scores Mean in our reviews intro pages and you'll see exactly what I mean. If you're a fan of clichés, you could do a lot worse.

If you're a fan of shit cash-ins on putridly voyeuristic TV shows, then you'll love *Big Brother: The Game.*
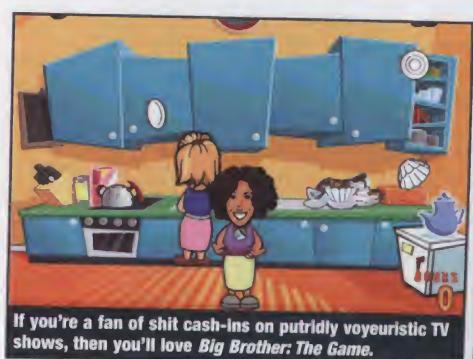
THE LATEST ON...

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2

The release date for the highly anticipated sequel has been officially set for fourth quarter 2001, which means it could come out at any stage after summer. Could they be any more vague? One of the biggest pieces of news to arrive on our desk is that you'll be able to control aeroplanes. Although this will be limited in the single-player game, multiplayer games will allow you to have proper dogfights. There'll be 24 missions across seven campaigns, which take place in Africa, Burma, London, Normandy, Czech borders and Germany, leading up to an epic battle between the SAS and the KGB. This seems to indicate that *Hidden & Dangerous 3* could be set in the Cold War years, which might disappoint all the hardcore WWII nuts but could end up being quite interesting.

MAFIA

Work on Illusion Software's gangster version of *Hidden & Dangerous* continues apace. Unlike *H&D*, where vehicles only appeared sporadically, there are more than 60 vans and other automobiles to take you from one part of The City of Lost Heaven to another. All the streets are heavily populated, so going crazy and driving over the pavement is completely out of the question. In what could work as a 1930s version of *Grand Theft Auto*, cops will be watching out for the merest hint of traffic infringement. And you don't want to be late with an appointment with the *capo* just because you skipped a red light. As for the multiplayer aspect, there are plenty of modes to choose from, including a *Counter-Strike* team-based type. We should hopefully be seeing it in Spring.

SUMMONER

Volition has been keeping so quiet about this role-playing game we thought it had decided to ditch PC version completely and just go with PlayStation 2. However, now that the PS2 version is finished work the team has turned all its efforts to complete the PC one. The reviews that have appeared on the Net of the PS2 title haven't been wholly favourable, some suggesting that the game hasn't been finished properly and reporting certain annoying bugs. Whether this means that THQ, the publisher, decided that enough time and money had been spent on the project and wanted to get the PC version out as soon as possible, we'll never know. But remember one thing, you can patch a PC game, you can't patch PS2 one.

SOLDIER

The film went straight to video, now the computer game could be canned altogether. What looked like an interesting if unspectacular third-person shooter is in danger of being buried into the ground never to be seen again. South Peak, the US publisher who was backing developer Sinister Games, is being sold to another company. The result is complete chaos, with jobs, and titles in development, suddenly on the line. Sinister Games has taken the hint and is already working on a next generation console game for Ubi Soft. We'll let you know what's happening when we find out more, but expect a small news piece saying: Soldier dead.

BRIDGE COMMANDER

When we heard the people who made the *X-Wing* and *Tie Fighter* games had switched over to the *Star Trek* universe, we knew our dream of a good Trekkie space sim was just around the corner. As you probably know, the game works in two different ways. Inside the bridge you give orders to all your officers to get things done, but then you can sit down at the tactical station and control the ship's movement directly. Although *Bridge Commander* won't be shipping with a mission editor, Totally Games seems quite positive that mod-creators won't find too many difficulties. Will the much talked about *Star Wars* versus *Star Trek* finally happen?

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

Duke developer 3Drealms has joined the Gathering Of Developers, which means *Duke Nukem 4* will now be published by Take 2 rather than Infogrames. It certainly hasn't affected 3DRealms strategy of keeping quiet about the project and releasing hardly any information whatsoever. In the words of one of the developers "once the game comes out, [people] will be blown away because they will have seen and will know very little about the game. The whole thing will be a surprise". They've also received no pressure so far to commit to a release date, keeping firmly to their original promise of: "It'll be finished when it's finished."

HOTSHOTS

There is only one dungeon worth going down this year

DUNGEON SIEGE

⊗ Microsoft • Out late summer

We may have been hard on *Diablo II* for being visually lacking, but *Dungeon Siege* from Gas Powered Games could soon wipe away all those unpleasant memories with some truly magnificent graphics and an amazing 3D engine. We're still not sure how the story will hold up, but the game does seem to be much more driven by party-based real-time battles, such as *Baldur's Gate*, rather than by a story such as *Planescape: Torment*. Not that this is a bad thing, especially considering how good those battles are looking. The massive 3D world is a continuous map that requires no loading between areas, so exploration will be a lot less painful. As reported last month, the multiplayer side will have to be confined to smaller parties, even if we were all hankering for the gigantic world being populated by hundreds of players. If only *EverQuest* looked this good.

MAILBOX

The knives are out this month over gender politics, dire hyped-up chart games and the usual online traumas...

⭐ **ANSWERED BY** Dave Woods

SUPER PRIZES TO BE WON

For the next few issues of *PC ZONE*, we will be giving away a Microsoft IntelliMouse to everyone who gets a letter printed in Mailbox. These digital rodents are perfect for 3D shooters and games that require a quick and precise response from your pointing device – you can even use them with Windows 98 if you really want to. So get your writing skates on and send us your literary masterpieces. We promise not to be rude when we reply to them. Well, not very.

GIRL POWER

Re: Rob Slade's letter, "Girl Power #1" in issue 97 of the magazine: Rob Slade seems to feel that the growing number of female gamers contributes to "everything being forced into politically-correct zones these days". Well, Mr Slade can whinge about how women are only fit to play "online washing-up sims or RPGs about make-up" but, in the end, he's the one who is creating his own ghetto. Out there in the real world, happy male and female gamers will continue to play together across a whole spectrum of genres, leaving people like Mr Slade to whinge about how only "their" sort of gamer is suited to play "their" sort of game – whatever that is. After all, there's no label on any box that says women, or men, can't play the game inside. Hey, more women playing games = more games being sold = more developers making games. Surely this can only be a good thing for the health of the industry?

I think Mr Slade should quit telling women what to play, and how to play it, and get on with improving his own game. If Mr Slade can't adapt to the simple concept of women playing games, I don't see why he should expect anyone to waste their time challenging him in the way men do", when the other person can happily continue working on their own individual style. Instead of complaining about how people aren't meeting his expectations, why not ask himself what he can contribute to, or accomplish by way of the gaming experience?

Really, as long as people are having fun and playing together, does it matter how your internal plumbing is connected? Or has Mr Slade not yet figured out which appendage to use when addressing a keyboard?

Mae Tang

⊗ When we printed Rob Slade's letter we were hoping that the legion of female *Zoners* would write in and defend their corner. We've had truck loads of letters on the subject,

> **"People like Mr Slade can whinge about how women aren't fit to play online, but they're the ones who are creating the ghetto"**
>
> **MAE TANG EXPLODES GAMES STEREOTYPES**

which we are now officially closing. The consensus is in: Slader, you're a sad old git. OK?

SPACED OUT

I just surveyed the two-foot length of bookshelf that holds my complete collection of *PC ZONE* magazine and wondered how much more space I can afford to devote to your mighty organ. It still amuses me to look at early issues and recall the excitement of the demo versions of *Catacomb Abyss* and *Space Hulk*, but sooner or later those glossy pages will find themselves moulding in the garage and being shredded for mice nests. So why not offer subscription readers, such as myself, a purely electronic form of the magazine? Ship the text in pdf format on the CD, or DVD. Save yourselves postage, conserve the world's diminishing trees, give the postman's back a break, and allow me to eek out many more years of collecting from the remaining few feet of shelf space in my study. It won't suit everyone, obviously, but I can't be the only one whose wife doesn't think 97 copies of *PC ZONE* in a row is classy.

PS How about a competition in your 100th edition posing questions based on the content of the first 99 issues. It would give sad bastards like myself a fighting chance of winning something. It would also allow me to say to the wife: "See, I told you they would come in handy".

Paul, via email

⊗ Your wife doesn't think 97 copies of *PC ZONE* in a row is classy? You've picked a wrong 'un there. I've canvassed the office and the best advice we can come up with is to keep any future copies under the bed with the rest of your other magazines. She'll never suspect a thing. And not only are we going to have loads of competitions next month to celebrate our 100th birthday, we're going to have a lot of guff that nostalgia freaks like you are going to love. So stay tuned.

WHO WANTS TO BE AN IDIOT?

In the last few issues of *PC ZONE*, I've noticed that the charts section has become a

As though we don't see enough of Chris Tarrant's smarmy, weathered face on TV, we're forced to endure his smugness in the games world. Still, he has been number one for years.

50:50	📞	👥👥👥
15	●	£1 MILLION
14	●	£500,000
13	●	£250,000
12	●	£125,000
11	●	£64,000
10	●	£32,000
9	●	£16,000
8	●	£8,000
7	●	£4,000
6	●	£2,000
5	●	£1,000
4	●	£500
3	●	£300
2	●	£200
1	●	£100

With games like *Deus Ex* on the PC, you don't have to go online to play great games.

bit of a whinging ground for *Deus Ex* supporters. The moan is, of course: 'Why isn't such a great game number one?' and your comments seem to mirror that view.

Now I don't know whether it is a great game or not because my PC ain't got the RAM nor the speed to cope with it. And surely there lies the answer. I have no doubt that all of the 'serious' gamers will upgrade regularly. With two expensive kids and a non-earning mature student wife, I can't afford to do that. And, to be honest, most people I know with PCs are like me.

So what we tend to buy are the games our machines will manage, such as *AOE II* and *The Sims*, which run well. Lower-spec games hit a greater number of games buyers.

So maybe next year, when my wife (hopefully) starts earning some brass, I will be able to upgrade or even get a new top-of-the-range PC. And then I can get *Deus Ex* (probably on budget by then) which will no doubt be as good as you say it is, as you rarely get reviews wrong. Until then, all the moaners do is irritate us poor souls who ain't got the kit to cope.

There is one bit, though, where I do support the moaners. What sort of idiot buys a pile of crud like *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*?
Barry Garside, Bradford

✪ It's a good question. We're trying to figure that one out as well. Send your answers on a postcard to Chris Tarrant.

OLD FOGEYS

I'm not your biggest fan (*Not the best way to start a letter – Ed*). In fact, I buy a variety of PC magazines, but out of all of them you stand out for being the best (*That's better – Ed*). You contain the most reliable reviews, even if I don't agree with all of the scores you dish out. So I think your mag is great. But the poor old lady who works at my local newsagents hates you and because of her you owe me some money. Last time I passed my copy of *Zone* to her she squinted, trailed her finger across the cover looking for the 'damn' price, which eventually she found. I gave her a fiver, she gave me a penny change and I didn't think anything else of it until I was at home and suddenly realised that you're supposed to be the cheapest games mag. I checked the cover and sure enough I found that I'd just been charged the export price. What are you going to do about that then?

without having to haggle or barter with the old lady ever again. Secondly, you should buy *ZONE* regularly enough to know exactly how much we charge, thus eliminating the possibility of paying over the odds.

Thirdly, accept the lovely mouse that we are going to send you by way of compensation.

TOTAL CONVERSION

I want to talk to you about console conversions. In principal I've got nothing against the idea and with the Xbox just around the corner it's something that we're going to have to get used to, but developers have got to realise that we're not going to put up with trash.

Take *Final Fantasy VII*. At first I was really looking forward to playing this on my PC, until I found out the interface is dire, the graphics are pants and the conversion from PSX controllers to chunky keyboard is less than inviting. Why couldn't the developers have integrated mouse support? And surely the battle sequences could have been spiced up to take advantage of the latest 3D accelerator cards?

It's not impossible. Take *Metal Gear Solid*. After hearing all

Mobile communications have never been so complicated, even in the progressive *Star Trek* world.

the hype surrounding the release on the PlayStation I decided to give it a go on the PC and I was pleasantly surprised. The graphics are superb, the gameplay is gripping and the interface is smooth with a capital

SMOO. If all future console conversions could be handled with this aplomb then the future would be brighter.
Jack Matthewson, Reading

✪ *Metal Gear* is a solid conversion, and the fact that it's come from Microsoft bodes well as far as we're concerned. The Xbox is going to make it even easier to convert to PC, so with any luck, examples like *FFVII* are a dying breed.

A TREKKIE TALKS

I would like to take issue with the *ZONE* team in general, and Paul Presley in particular. During the recent *Star Trek* Supertest it quickly became perfectly obvious you weren't taking the event seriously. Instead you ended up belittling the lifestyle of many of your readers by poking fun at something in a bid to make yourselves look clever.

I don't think you are. If you take another look at the main photograph you'll notice that Martin Korda (and Paul Presley in a smaller one) is holding the communicator as if it's a mobile phone. If you've ever watched the programme you'll know that this is not the case. Also, the backdrop you used was blatantly not the bridge of the Enterprise, and although I appreciate that this might have been difficult I fail to see the point in mocking something up in a bid to fool your readers. I would also like to take issue with being branded an "obsessive geek", and a "socially awkward loser", just two of the phrases that Paul Presley used in his latest piece of objective journalism.

✪ We're proud of the fact that we're "obsessive geeks" and "socially awkward males". You should be as well, although Korda's use of the mobile... sorry communicator was obviously beyond reproach. And if it makes you feel better, both Mark and Richie are fans, and I watched a couple of episodes back in the late '70s. 📺

Brothers at arms

The Bitmaps are back with a sequel to one of the most devilishly simple strategy games ever devised. *Richie Shoemaker*, who's just simple, meets the UK developers to see what they've been up to for the past four years

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER The Bitmap Brothers
PUBLISHER EON
WEBSITE www.bitmap-brothers.co.uk
OUT March

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- The Bitmaps are back
- Action-packed 3D real-time strategy
- Simple ideas, polished to a shine
- A touch of humour, included free of charge

t's amazing what an insular world adolescence is. Maybe it was just me, but at the age of 13, I unswervingly thought Britain was the centre of the games industry. After all, we made the best computers (Spectrum, BBC, Dragon 32 – actually scratch that last one, it ran on coal and was rubbish), and the finest games in Christendom (*Atic Atac*, *Starquake*, *Elite* – the list is endless). Years later and, thankfully, though our collective skills at soldering transistors to rubber keyboards may have waned, British games are still some of the most innovative and engrossing titles you can buy and the Bitmap Brothers, along with Bullfrog, Ultimate Play The Game (now Rare) and individuals like Molyneux, McLean and Crammond, have constantly proved their worth time and time again. In fact, they haven't really had a duffer yet and having played a couple of levels of an early

build of *Z: Steel Soldiers*, it doesn't look like they're about to start now.

But it has been a while since the Bitmaps released a game on PC. In fact, their last was the original *Z*, a one-time *PC ZONE* Classic that remarkably, still remains very

"Don't know about you, but I'm bloody frozen."

STEEL SOLDIERS

playable if you like a serious challenge and if you can get the damn thing to work on today's ultra-fast machines.

"The guys in the office still play it, both in single and multiplayer," smiles head Bitmap Mike Montgomery, as he sips his tea. "But then I would say that, wouldn't I?" And a good thing, too, for under the 3D-accelerated graphics *Steel Soldiers* retains the same simple ideals that have characterised every Bitmap game since *Xenon* was released in 1988. It all comes down to gameplay, really, and the original *Z* had it in spades. By default *Z2*, (recently renamed *Z: Steel Soldiers*) should be equally laden with anarchic fun. The rechristening, by the way, was because of trademarks: car bores

will know that BMW have some four-wheeled conveyance called a Z3 which, although rather good for getting the shopping home, kind of kills off all hope of any subsequent Z sequel – or at least it did.

"You wouldn't believe the heartache we've been through finding a new name," says Mike. "It's just been unbelievable. Everyone in the office had their own ideas that they liked and it got to the point where you just think, 'fucking hell, let's just stick a pin in the wall and see what comes out'. *Steel Soldiers* stuck out for me when we got down to the last five names, because it represents what the game is about. Robots. Made of steel. Or something."

CHANGING DIRECTION

Up until recently, names have been the least of the Bitmaps worries. The four years *Z2* – sorry, *Steel Soldiers* – spent in development prove that it hasn't been an easy

We like explosives a lot – too much, actually.

CV

THE BITMAP BROTHERS

From the start, the Bitmaps had a glorious career and their star has been ascendant ever since

1988 The Bitmaps release their first game in January, *Xenon*, a top-down scrolling shooter and what an impressive debut, it scoops rave reviews and endless awards. Later that year *Speedball* is released for Amiga and Atari ST and sets the standard by which all future sports games will be measured.

1989 August sees the release of *Xenon 2: Megablast*, receiving more awards and accolades. *The One* magazine called it 'the best vertically scrolling shoot 'em up ever written'. The thing is, even after a decade, it probably still is. It looked amazing and, with a fantastic soundtrack by Bomb The Bass, it sounded pretty good as well.

1990 Resurrecting the timeless adventure gameplay of *Knight Lore*, *Cadaver* showed that the Bitamps could pretty much turn their hands to anything and do it fabulously well. As if that wasn't enough, three months later, *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe* bursts onto the 16-bit machines. An absolutely brilliant single-player game, it was an even better two-player game, just as good, if not better than the untouchable *Sensible Soccer*.

1991 Once again, with seemingly little effort, the Bitmaps turned their attentions to the platform game and released *Gods* in March. This was no simple *Mario*-clone, however, *Gods* was intelligent and beautiful. Some say it's the Bitmaps finest game, but alongside all the others, it's a tricky one to call. Without a doubt, however, it was their busiest year, with

the fantastic *Magic Pockets* and *Cadaver: The Payoff* both being released.

1992 Mixing steampunk influences with the fast-paced gameplay of *Gaunlet: The Chaos Engine* again brings in numerous awards. *C&VG* magazine said: "There are so many avenues of gameplay that it'll turn your head inside out." Quite.

1994 Less adventurous but no less frenetic, *The Chaos Engine 2*, again, wows gamers. This time, however, requiring a pretty meaty machine (1Mb, no less), a few gamers were left out. I was one of them.

1996 And the Bitmaps reinvent themselves again, this time as masters of strategy with *Z*, one of the most intense real-time strategy games ever devised. "A brilliant strategy game that is so hard you can't help but get value from it – unless you're so crap you can't get off the first level, and you'll know, because you'll be told." That's what we said and, true to form, I was crap.

1998 First told of *Z2*'s existence at the end of 1998, I miss my appointment with Mike Montgomery during the E3 gameshow in LA. He was livid, I apologised, and I think he's forgotten.

2000 Pocket-money budget label Crucial rerelease *Gods*, *Magic Pockets*, *Speedball 2* and *Xenon 2*, each for a fiver. With *Z2* still in development, the Bitamps release their first game for four years, *Speedball 2100* for the PlayStation. As to a possible PC version, Mike says: "I keep tossing the idea around and I can't make my mind up is the honest answer. I'd like to, but we'll see." You read it here first.

2001 After being in development for four years, *Z: Steel Soldiers* finally sees the light of day in March (hopefully). Afterwards we're sure the *Steel Soldiers* will return, as well as we hope new games.

ride. Taking an outside view, and this from someone who spent many hours indoors playing *Speedball* when, at 18, I should have been swallowing them, the Bitmaps four-year hiatus from gaming's fickle limelight has been far too long.

"Originally, when we first started, we were quite productive," says Mike. "The problem is that nowadays it costs a lot more money and you have to put more effort into a game and certainly, to do a game up to the quality of the Bitmap Brothers is expensive and it takes time. We always wanted to make things perfect, so we've spent a lot of time on *Steel Soldiers*, maybe too much time. But on this particular product we have made some brave moves, and 10 months ago we actually changed direction in a big way. It was like, 'shit, we've spent three years on this game and it's not really what we originally wanted.' It was a brave step for us to change direction slightly and, although we lost a little bit of time, it was the best thing we could have done and we've ended up with what we think is brilliant."

Jamie Barber is the one who knows the real ins-and-outs of *Steel Soldiers*. Lead Designer on the game from its conception, he has made it his mission to play every real-time strategy game since time began. From his not unpleasant research, one factor has been at the forefront of the Bitmap ideal – simplicity.

"The territory model is very simple, in fact, it's as simple as you could possibly get. It was slightly more complicated than it is and after a few quick decisions we changed it,

tried it and everybody loved it. We streamlined the whole game, cut everything back and the game has become so simple, so intuitive – which is exactly what we were aiming to achieve, but we overcomplicated things in development by putting in things that we didn't need.

By going back to grass roots, all of a sudden we got the game that we wanted – a fast-action wargame."

Of course, the biggest change from the original *Z* is that Mike and his micro-mechanics have had to create a 3D engine from scratch.

Significantly, as with Westwood's recently announced *Dune 2* sequel, *Emporer: Battle For Dune*, *Steel Soldiers* will be the Bitmaps first full 3D game and as Westwood has repeatedly professed, it's not a step to be taken lightly for a company who've yet to dissappoint its fans.

Mentioning Westwood and the Bitmaps in the same sentence, however, is not a clever thing to do. "*Z* was classed as a *Command & Conquer* clone," says Mike, almost as if the comparisons still wound him. "It wasn't anything like *C&C*, they are two completely different products. I wouldn't even say they were in the same genre, or if they are, they are at two extreme ends. That was a shame because *Z* was more arcade strategy, almost as if you could keep putting 10p coins in and keep playing and playing and if you stopped for a second, you lost."

"With *Steel Soldiers* we've kept some of that, the simple ideas and arcade-action style of gameplay.

But what we've got now is a very advanced AI system in there, well we think it's very advanced. The AI only uses line-of-sight, it doesn't cheat... much, no it doesn't cheat. Well, it does a bit..."

INTELLIGENT SERVICE

The Bitmap Brothers have never been ones to mess about. In that it's played in real-time and requires strategic thought, *Z: Steel Soldiers*, like it's predecessor, is a real-time strategy game. Using such broad terms, however, paints the wrong picture of a game that if it were a first-person shooter, would be closer to *Quake* than *Half-Life* – a fast-paced strategy deathmatch if you will, that promises to play equally well offline and on.

"Every time you play it's that little bit different," gushes Mike. "We spent a whole year putting scripts into the game, then we finished the AI system and thought, 'shit, we can take all these scripts out – well, 95 per cent of them'. We had to keep a few in there to set the AI up, maybe give the AI some initial objectives to wake the player up. You know, like 'come on, bloody do something'. You can't just sit there, if you do you're going to die. It's put right in your face.

we noticed the AI sent out a scout helicopter, he's never done that before."

"It's scary when that happens," says Jamie, nodding. "You can have robots in a bunker and sometimes, though not all the time, when you're firing at it with a couple of long-range units, just as it's about to blow, the enemy flood out and annihilate you. That unpredictability adds to the game so much."

It's a more realistic approach to gameplay. Rather than having their game in a real-world environment that will set *Steel Soldiers* apart and rather than crowbar in new features to list on the back of the box, it seems that less is most definitely more. As with the original *Z*, there is no fog of war in the game, when you start the game you can pan and zoom across the entire level. You can see the boundaries between each territory, where the flag capture points are and take a guess at where your enemy might first appear by just looking over the terrain rather than having to attempt the level again and again.

In *Z: Steel Soldiers*, unlike almost every other strategy game, you can't blame defeat on not knowing the level, only on your tactical incompetence.

"You just have to go out there," Mike points out. "You take the flag, the flag gives you the territory, the

> **❝Under the accelerated 3D graphics, *Steel Soldiers* retains the simple ideals that have characterised every Bitmap game since the release of *Xenon*❞**

"From then on it makes decisions on what you are doing, as if you and I were playing a multiplayer game. You try a new tactic and the AI reacts to what you do. The other day

size of the territory gives you an amount of credits and as along as you have one territory, you can get credits and can always build something – and that is it. It's as

HISTORY REPEATING

Let's take a closer look at The Bitmap's back catalogue...

XENON
They don't make 'em like this anymore, a scrolling, top-down shoot 'em up that although looked a bit 'grey', played beautifully.

SPEEDBALL
Futuristic sports games are rubbish, but it wasn't always this way. Back in the day *Speedball* was as good as *Kick Off* and *Sensible Soccer*.
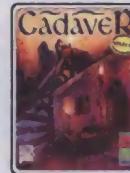
CADAVER
The Bitmaps go all ghosts and goblins in *Cadaver, and it was* a million miles away from their usual sci-fi fare. Bloody brilliant though.

SPEEDBALL 2
Bigger, better, more violent and just as furious, *Speedball 2* remains as playable today as it was ten years ago. A fiver? Sold.

XENON 2: MEGABLAST
If not the first, *Xenon 2* was certainly the best use of 'proper' music ever seen in a videogame. Cracking game too.
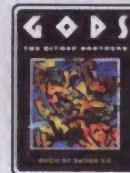
GODS
Mario – In 1991 you couldn't get away from the git. With its darker edge and intelligent gameplay, *Gods* was mana from heaven.

MAGIC POCKETS
Jumping, running, collecting things – the staple diet of a good platform game and ingredients mixed almost to perfection once again.

CADAVER: THE PAYOFF
With an overdraft the size of Nebraska, I was gutted I couldn't afford the 500K upgrade required to play this sequel.

THE CHAOS ENGINE
Showing they were the masters when it came to original themes, *Chaos Engine* was perhaps the first ever Steampunk game.

Z
Apart from having the shortest title ever, *Z* remains one of the fastest strategy games to date. Not for long however, the sequel is nearly here.

SOLDIERING ONLINE

Steel yourself for some multiplayer mayhem

Let's face it, you may have the most amazing single-player game sitting on your hard drive, but without multiplayer options, how long do you think it will last there? A month? Two days? Look at *Half-Life*, the most involving single-player game ever made? Probably. And yet, when did you last play through the game on your own? Exactly. And why is it still there taking up valuable hard drive space? *Counter-Strike*? Case closed.

Which is why *Steel Soldiers* will come with a wealth of multiplayer options: "There's a timed game," says Jamie. "A hero game, which is similar to Regicide in *Age Of Empires II* or the Commander in *Total Annihilation*, resource-based games if you want to fight for territory, deathmatch-style team games, flag games – all of which can be played in Skirmish mode against the AI. We should have about 20 multiplayer maps, for between two and eight players. You don't realise how difficult it is to create maps for three-, five- or seven-player games...

"We're still thinking about third-party support. We'll have logos in there for multiplayer, so it should be easy if people want to add logos to their units. But as far as letting people create their own units, we don't know. We've spent so much time balancing them that we may just stick to what we release. We don't want people changing things too much."

Every unit is superbly animated.

"Nuts anyone?"

These guys know how to guard.

If you let them stand around for too long, you're dead steel.

"It must have snowed last night."

Steel Soldiers is the RTS equivalent of *Quake*.

It's got tanks and everything.

You could lose your eye with one of these.

Another base bites the dust.

All the horrors of war....

War is hell, laddy, especially when you get your limbs blown off.

Blow up the opposition. Simple.

simple as that. You don't have to go and build a robot, who has to build a cart, which has to go out and collect the rubbish from the rubbish bins. It's just very simple. The resource comes from taking territory. In *Steel Soldiers,* you just have to take the map."

"If you've got a radar net it will show you the positions of the enemy units," Jamie adds. "But you will only physically see units if you have a line of sight to them, if you've got spotters on top of hills or units moving around nearby."

"We did have unit facing in there as well," Mike explains, "where line of sight was dependant also on which way the units were looking, but it was unplayable and boring. It doesn't work in a fast-paced action game like *Steel Soldiers.* All through development we've tried things out before dismissing them. Just recently we had fire trucks in, but it spoilt the experience of the game and they just didn't fit in, so we thought 'sod it, take 'em out'. We've done that with quite a few things.

FUNNY HA-HA
One thing that has been left in and perhaps one of the many factors that sets *Z* apart from its contemporaries was the humour. *Z* centred on two robots, Brad and Alan, incompetent droids that starred in numerous cut-scenes. In this sequel both have been marooned, court-martialed and this time around take a more active part in the main game. Back,

too, is Zod, the cybernetic general based on Robert Duvall's napalm-loving character from *Apocalypse Now* (you may have noticed him on the cover). "There's more of a story, which we didn't have before. It's more plot-driven and focused," Mike stresses. "It's also a bit darker this time around, less slapstick. But the humour still comes through with the exploits of the main characters – Brad, Alan and General Zod.

"I went to the sound recordings for the mission briefings and I was in stitches. We actually have the same voice actors that we had before, so we have continuity and these guys really are hilarious. Brad and Alan are actually the names of the two voice actors, and after we played them a few cut-scenes from the first game, they snapped back into character in seconds.

The new voice actor, Pete, worked on *Phantom Menace* and previous *Star Wars* films as well, so in voice acting circles we've got the best. But they thought it was the hardest work they'd done for months. They were losing their voice at one point."

"While we were doing the recording," Jamie remembers, laughing. "I went for a slash and Brad came in to get some water to take some paracetamol with because he had a sore throat. And while I was standing there doing my

business, he suddenly turned round and, in (robot) Brad's voice, shouted: 'Atten-shun!' How I didn't piss down my trouser leg, I'll never know. He really scared the shit out of me, the bastard."

TIME TO PLAY
After being lead through a few nearly-completed missions by Jamie, it was then time for me to dive in. To say the game is a bit pacey would be something of an understatement, but having played through all of the 'big' strategy games of last year, of which *Ground Control* is perhaps the closest in nature, what stuck me was the movement on screen and the clean way in which everything is displayed. The terrain may not be the most realistic interpretation of what you might find on an alien planet, but it all goes back to gameplay. Everything is immediately in view. Units don't get obscured by trees, you don't get massive status bars clogging up the screen (something that really gets my goat) and every unit sits well on the undulating terrain. Tanks don't float or sink into the landscape as they often do with so many other games. In fact, each unit moves pretty much as you would expect. Jeeps skid over the flats and arc over hills rather than take straight

Changing direction was a brave step for us, and although we lost some time, it was the best thing we could've done

lines and turn on the spot and the robots themselves are animated to the point that in formation they move as individuals. If it wasn't for the fact that to do so wouldn't get you very far, you could probably sit there for hours watching and listening to the metal carnage that follows.

Unfortunately, though, I didn't have time to get used to the interface (I had to plead to even play anything after level one), and by the time I managed to get a grip on the game, the damn thing went and crashed.

"We haven't optimised the code yet," says Mike, as the PC flicks back to life. "In fact, we haven't done any optimisation for a year. Plus this PC we're playing on was dropped on the floor a little while back and we just flung all the bits back together. It's amazing it works at all. Maybe we should have done this on my machine"

"For the interface, though our brief to the designers and programmers has been 'I don't want to press a key, I don't actually mind if you put the key stuff in there, that's fine.' Some people like those things, but I don't. Therefore, you can play the whole game without touching a key, everything is controlled by the mouse. It's very easy. Same thing with the status bar.

Ever wondered what a spontaneously combusting tank actually looked like?

View your shooting angle from a whole range of angles.

Is this supposed to be the battle of the Grand Canyon or something?

It's there if you want it, but you can move it, minimise it or keep it to the default set-up. Even though the camera angles are restricted, you can still go to the options screen and change things so you can zoom further, swing faster, whatever. Basically, we've made things simple. But for those who like keyboard-shortcuts and completely free cameras, you can do all that as well."

THE END IS NIGH

Outside their Wapping headquarters the rain clawed its way down the windows and the sun was sinking rapidly. Just back from a gruelling press trip across the US, the team were looking forward to an uncharacteristicly quiet Christmas. Before then, however, there was still much to do. Few missions were complete, though most weren't far off, the cut-scenes and a few voices had to be added and then came the messy business of tweaking and testing the game on every possible machine they could lay their hands on. Come February, the end will be in sight.

"It's been a long four years," says Jamie, looking back. "I spent ages researching into units. We played every RTS we could find, I spoke to friends and to online RTS fans – this was about the time of *StarCraft*, where RTS games had multiple races in, and although it's something we don't really agree with, it worked so well in *StarCraft* that we were going to have four races in *Steel Soldiers*. We didn't, though, not because of balancing issues, but because with all the best strategy games: chess, backgammon, draughts, the sides are equal and

that's what makes them so playable. We've got 30 different units and 20 buildings, which is a fair selection. We wanted the importance to be on the individual units, their worth and balance and the combination between them. If you know what units you have, you know what you're up against. Because we've got just two sides, both with the same units, we've been able to put all our time into balancing them.

"With the single-player campaign we have 30 levels, broken into stages of five levels set across six environments. Thing is, we didn't want to do six types of terrain that were all basically the same but in different colours, so we have different terrain effects and lighting, vehicles may work better on one terrain than on another. Also, each terrain will have its own eco-system, with little creatures running around. So each set of five maps will have a distinctive style."

"There are loads of neat things," adds Mike. "For instance, in one level the enemy start off with a couple of medium tanks and you start with snipers among other things. Thing is, the tanks are not on the tech tree for that level, so the only way you can get them is to use your snipers. Later on you can use snipers to take out helicopter pilots, so that you can nick those. You can put robots onto APCs, then put the APCs onto transport helicopters – which I hadn't learnt about until today, which makes me laugh. I've *got* to see that work."

"It does," insists Jamie.
"I'm quite sure it does," says Mike.

"But it's quite frightening. I think it's really cool. Anyway, I'll shut up now. Shall I turn the tape off?"

Just one more question: Will we have to wait another four years for the next Bitmap Brothers game?

"Probably," laughs Mike. "Well, hopefully not. We have got a couple of game ideas. What we've done that we haven't before is develop a concept to a point where we can find a publisher, *then* finish the game. We've actually started that process. As to consoles, what we're doing is creating games that

we want to play, rather than fit a game to a specific format. We'll do the game first, then think about what machine it would suit best." And with that, the tape runs out almost on cue.

Outside, the rain is relentless and, as I decide whether I should go back to work or piss off home, I remember that quite wisely I never let on that I didn't really get on with the original *Z* at first. Too darned difficult, you see. But then I didn't tell them that if it wasn't for *Xenon 2*, I wouldn't have dumped my Spectrum for an Atari ST. Or how much I was looking forward to *Steel Soldiers*. Maybe another time. 🎮

ZED ODER ZEE?

Say what you see

We like *Z*. We like *Z* not only because it's the name of a great game from a great developer, but it also stands for Zone, as in *PC ZONE*. We almost feel it's as much our game as it is the Bitmaps'. It's funny, doesn't mess about and was successful without compromising its beliefs. But that's enough about us.

Trouble is, Americans don't understand *Z*. They can't even pronounce it. I remember trying to give my email address over the phone to someone in the US and it took half and hour to explain that just as football is played with one's feet, *PCZ* is pronounced 'pee see zed'. Mike Montgomery has had the same problem.

"The original game they called

➲ "Zod you lot! I'm out for a beer."

'zee', which is another reason why we changed the name. It's called *Z: Steel Soldiers* in Europe, but in America it's just *Steel Soldiers*.

"I'm not going through this heartache again where it's like: 'OK, so what game have you done?' 'Well, I've done Zed.' 'Zed?' 'Yeah, you know, the last letter of the alphabet.' 'What, Zee?' 'No Zed!' Actually, it's quite fun, the first time it came up in conversation I really didn't understand what they were talking about. The weird thing is that, although they pronounce *Z* as 'zee', they spell it 'zed', depending on what state you're in.

Sierra 2001:
STATE OF PLAY

Surviving the fast food, carbon monoxide mists and hordes of Americans, *Martin Korda* made a hellish journey to Bush country to see what gaming delights those clever developers at Sierra Studios have in store for us in 2001. He returned exhausted, but impressed

DAY 7
Los Angeles Airport

As I sit here at the world's most depressing airport, LAX, staring into my cardboard coke container I can't help thinking back over the events of the last week. Soon I'll be on that long plane journey home, stuffing myself full of aspirin in a desperate attempt to stop my body seizing up from blood clots and watching crap movies on a half-inch screen attached to the seat in front of mine. Needless to say, it's something I'm dreading. Out of the group of eight journalists from all around Europe who went on this trip, I'm the last to leave.

So I thought I'd take this opportunity to write a gratuitous and reflective intro about my week here. No, not because I'm a pretentious bastard, but because the one shop at this hell hole of an airport has a selection of three types of magazine – men's, women's and fitness mags – each containing the same four themes they've used since their launch issue. It's always good to meet developers face to face. Without exception, they exude an enthusiasm to show off their product, tell you about it in intricate detail and accommodate your every need when it comes to information about their

game. One thing that's struck me more than anything else is their passion for games, and with people such as these working in the industry and producing games of this quality, the PC has a bright future in front of it. Anyhow, I'd better finish, I've got eleven hours of boredom and food that tastes like a tramp's sock to look forward to. It's not all glamour, you know...

DAY 1
San Francisco
Stainless Steel Studios
EMPIRE EARTH

Unfortunately, we have to wait until next month before we can bring you the full lowdown on this game. However, the good news is all the info and screenshots will be exclusive to *PC ZONE* so make sure you don't miss it, because one thing I can tell you now is that it's looking pretty damn good.

DAY 2
San Francisco
Click Studios
THRONE OF DARKNESS
🔴 Expected Release Date: March 2001

The day starts on a dodgy note, when the taxi driver who picks us up turns out to have no knowledge of San Francisco and no grasp of the English language. After a lot of gesticulating and pointing, we finally manage to get him to drive us somewhere, only to find he's dropped us off at the wrong place. Fortunately we have more luck with the next cab driver.

And after the usual rigmarole of introductions, hand shaking and business-card swapping, we sit through a presentation from lead designers Ben Haas and Doron Iasaac Gartner, both of whom have previously worked on *Diablo* at Blizzard. Having broken away from the company in mid 1997, they set up Click Studios.

Their latest project is set in

ironically, take over as the ruler of his evil empire. The most exciting feature is the ability for any number between five and 35 people to play online at once, with each player controlling anything from one to seven samurai.

Of course, this all sounds a tad unfair on the side who have to protect the top castle, especially once Doron explains that the other four teams can form alliances. So how has Click dealt with this possible stumbling block? Ben explains:"Although you can form alliances, only one side can become the new rulers. So this means alliances will have to be broken and can be broken at any time. Whichever side kills the Dark Warlord wins." With the end battle coming down to a full-on brawl, we could see some interesting loyalty dilemmas.

Ben and Doron have been adamant from day one that *TOD* will reflect Japanese history and mythology as closely as possible, a fact made evident by the huge collection of Japanese literature on show around their offices. "I didn't want to make a Japanese game without knowing about Japan," says Ben. Commendable, indeed, and from the sizeable selection of mythological creatures they show us, it looks as if they've certainly been doing their homework. The same goes for your choice of character. These include an archer, wizard, berserker, sumo warrior, ninja and leader, all of whom will, of course, have unique abilities. They'll also have an individual quest, which when completed will reward you with a Manga-style cinematic, revealing the character's past as well as a sizeable improvement in their skill levels.

Click has also tackled the potential problem of controlling more than one character at a time, with a Play

THRONE OF DARKNESS

Click Studios: The team behind *Throne Of Darkness*.

With their paper walls, Medieval Japanese houses had a real problem with noise pollution.

Well done mate, you've got 'em right where you want 'em.

Before you get to face the man himself, you'll have to dispose of the Dark Warlord's minions.

Typical. You get a lovely screenshot, and two geezers come and stand in front of it.

> **"These boys have already tasted success with *Diablo*, and we all remember how good that was, so I can't help feeling confident they'll do the same with *Throne Of Darkness*"**

Medieval Japan, where the story revolves around five kingdoms, one of which is governed by a powerful warlord. After falling ill, he is tricked by a strange wizard to drink a potion which turns him into an evil dictator. The rulers of the four smaller kingdoms, now under threat, send their personal bodyguards, consisting of seven samurai, to kill the evil monarch. That's where you come in.

Although *Throne Of Darkness* is primarily aimed at an online audience, it also comes with a single-player mode. Basically, you have to kill the Dark Warlord and, somewhat

Calling interface. "You can tell them (your characters) how to feel and act, as well as what weapon or spell to use," Ben continues. "Just one click of the mouse can change their position, formation, weapon and attitude, through a preset command which you'll have configured earlier." Doron adds: "Combat is in real-time, but instead of you doing each attack, it's like directing a team." It's an excellent idea, which could make *TOD* far more accessible to the online RPG newcomer, while allowing plenty of experimentation for RPG veterans.

As with any conversation about RPGs, the subject inevitably drifts onto magic. "The way the magic works is a bit different to say *Diablo*," claims Ben. "You have the ability to give your weapons or mana to either a blacksmith or a

🔴 Lead designers at Click Studios, Doron Iasaac Gartner and Ben Haas.
➡️

TRIBES 2

"I've got the flag."

Deathmatches will allow up to 64 gamers to play at once.

Back-mounted jet packs allow you to jump huge distances.

Dave Georgeson, head honcho at Dynamix.

The team at Dynamix Studios try to look their best for the cameras.

priest. The blacksmith will be able to melt down the ore and fashion new weapons out of it, while the priest will be able to use the extra mana to cast better spells."

After lunch, we are excitedly told about the cinematic cut scenes, and then we're played the Manga-style intro. Reactions are mixed, to say the least, ranging from a somewhat overexcited outburst from the German journalist who nearly fell out of his chair as he enthused: "That was amazing, the way you have done the Manga," to total

DAY 3
Eugene, California
Dynamix Studios
TRIBES 2

⊙ Expected Release Date: April 2001

Having flown to Eugene the night before, on a plane that can best be described as a matchbox with wings, we wake up early and gather for breakfast. There's a distinct buzz about the group, as it's generally agreed that this is the game we've been looking forward to the most.

Dynamix's head honcho, Dave

have a list of players, with their histories, new names etc. You'll be able to see what people are like. People will be more careful with what they do." Which can only be a good thing. Anyone who has ever played *Counter-Strike* online will know just how annoying it is when a member of your squad starts gunning down your teammates, because he or she thinks it's some kind of hilarious joke. Do this sort of thing in *Tribes* and everyone will know you're a tosser. It's a bit like carrying around a criminal record.

The demonstration starts with a run through of the new vehicles. First up is the Wild Cat Grab Cycle, a speedy but weedy hover bike, which can bounce and jump around the terrain, making it a hard target to hit. Next is the Assault Vehicle, which has room for both a driver and gunner, and is armed

with a plasma gun and mortar. Finally, there's the Jericho, a mobile base which although slow, carries an arsenal of devastating missiles and also works as a respawn point when you die. During any team game, each side will be given a minimum number of each of the vehicles, meaning you'll need careful resource management as well as all-out violence and team work if you're to succeed.

Next on display are the weapons, and Dave happily demonstrates an array of heat-seeking missiles and mines, as well as the clever Shock Lance – a short-ranged weapon that literally drains your opponent's health away. Then we're shown the three types of grenade, flash bang (self explanatory), concussion (knocks enemies off their feet) and flare (used to divert enemy missiles). Great explosions, too, and as if that wasn't enough, we're treated to all the different terrain types (ice, desert, lush, badlands and volcano) as well as a glimpse at the varying and changeable weather conditions, such as rain and thunder storms, which will affect the handling of all the vehicles. Finally, we're introduced to the new race, the BioDerm, former slaves of humankind who have revolted against their subjugators and are intent on wiping out the human race forever. Although it's not demonstrated to us

> **"In *Tribes 2* online, there'll be an option to mute anyone you don't want to listen to, so you won't have to put up with screaming maniacs as you try to get team work going"**

indifference from the Dane. Personally, I wasn't really impressed either, but then again they only have a modest team of three working on the cinematics, unlike Blizzard's assembly line-up of 17.

As we said our goodbyes amid a flurry of photo shoots, I felt relatively impressed with what I'd seen. The online campaigns look like they're going to be a hoot. However, if anything's going to let it down, it'll be the cinematics and storyline. There's not much scope for either, and there are no fabulous cut-scenes waiting to reward your achievements. But these boys have already tasted success with *Diablo* – and we all remember how good that was – so I can't help feeling confident that they'll do the same with *Throne Of Darkness*.

Georgeson, takes charge of proceedings to give us the spiel about this follow-up squad-based FPS. As with *TOD* the day before, the emphasis is again on online gaming. "We wanted to make a website that links the *Tribes* community, which allows gamers to get together and play," begins Dave as he brings up the game's official webpage. He explains that one of the major problems with *Tribes* was that too often, people who played online couldn't find other gamers of the same standard as them. "There's gonna be a world ranking and league system, so you can easily identify people who are at your level," explains Georgeson. "We're going to

directly, we're assured that over the net communication will be included in *Tribes 2*, and that there'll be an option to mute anyone you don't want to listen to, so solving the problem of a dozen frenzied maniacs screaming in your ear as you vainly try to get some team work going.

One of the most striking features is the beauty of both the interior and exterior areas, which flow seamlessly into one another without any slow down or loading time – well, at least there wasn't any on the Cray 2 supercomputer equivalent Dynamix was demonstrating on. Of course, all of these features come at a price, and we're told that you're looking at a PIII 600 if you want to get the most out of the game, more if you want to get involved in the 64-player deathmatches that are available.

Once the demo ends, there's a mad rush for the two machines running the game. Journalists are falling over each other, some minor skirmishes break out, but eventually we all manage to have a go.

I have to admit I'm surprised at just how good the game is. Forget every other FPS you've ever played, this is something totally different. Players fly through the air as they propel themselves with back-mounted jet packs, and the physics are spot on as you fight to change direction at high speed. Hitting an enemy who's just jumped over your head is at first next to impossible, and yet the beta-testers who were playing against us and who obviously spend their whole lives online pick me off with consummate ease. I'm not exaggerating when I say that it was one of the most thrilling FPSs, let alone squad-based FPSs, that I've ever played, and it adds an extra dimension (the ability to jump, hover and fly), which the likes of *Quake III* and *Unreal Tournament*, for the most part, sadly lack. Keep an eye out for this one, but if it's as good as it appears to be from a demonstration and the half an hour I got to try it out, you'll probably find it pretty hard to miss when it hits the shelves.

DAY 4
Los Angeles, California
Troica Games
ARCANUM
⊙ Expected Release Date: May 2001

Walking into the Troica Games offices is like entering an old Soviet propaganda centre. Posters of past USSR successes adorn the walls, including Yuri Gagarin's first flight into space. The irony of it all soon becomes apparent when you meet the three men who drive the company, Jason Anderson, Leonard Boyarsky and Tim Cain, all are as American as they come, loving fast cars, fast food and freedom of choice,

the last of which is vividly reflected in their latest game, Steampunk RPG, *Arcanum*.

As they speak, it's obvious that depth of gameplay, longevity and gaming freedom have been at the forefront of their minds while developing *Arcanum*. "We're guessing that you're looking at anywhere from 40 to 60 hours of gameplay, if you just try sticking to the main storyline. It could easily shoot up to 100 hours if you do all the sub-quests as well. There are so many different ways to play. We've built in the ability to play it any way you want to. It's very open ended," begins Jason. Of course, we've all heard this sort of thing before, and all too often we're left feeling let down. The only game to date that has successfully managed this is *Deus Ex*. So how exactly are

> **❝We've built in the ability to play *Arcanum* any way you want to. It's very open ended. For starters, you can complete quests by betraying people❞**

they planning to achieve this fantastically ambitious task?

Jason smiles wryly and says: "For starters, you can complete quests by betraying people. We've done this thing where the dark side of quests is sometimes easier than the good side. There's this guy you go to who gives you this really complicated quest, and if you complete it, he'll give you an item, and he has the item on him. So you can just kill him and get the item that way, and sometimes it's tempting just to do that." Still unconvinced, I ask him in what other ways the game is open-ended. For example, could you just go round killing everyone? Once again, unfazed, Jason says: "You could go around killing everyone you were supposed to talk to, and just cast Speak With Dead on them, and get the info that way. Also, the more evil your deeds, the more evil your character becomes and in turn, other characters will react differently to you."

Having got carried away with this line of questioning, Tim decides it might be a good idea if someone filled us all in on the game's storyline. "You play a character who's coming over from another continent on a Zeppelin. You can be any character you want, whether it's a technologist or a stupid half ogre. The Zeppelin gets shot down by orcs in rickety old planes and everybody dies apart from you. A dying gnome tells you that there's a great evil coming, and that you have to take the ring he gives you and give it to some boy. All you have is this silver ring with initials

engraved on the inside. Then this other guy comes running up to you and says that when he saw the blimp crash, he knew that he'd just witnessed the fulfilment of a great prophecy. So you sit there kind of going, 'I've no idea what you're talking about'." He's right, I've no idea what he's gibbering on about, but apparently that's the whole point. Just like *Deus Ex*, you start off with very little knowledge of what's going on around you, so that the story can unfold as you play.

One of the things that particularly grabs my attention is the scope for role-playing your character. Rather than just having a set of irrelevant stats and an alignment, you'll find that NPCs react to you differently, depending on your race, occupation etc. "You can be any kind of character, and the game will adapt, so if you're an elf, the wizard you meet at the start of the game will react positively to you, but negatively if you're a stupid half orc," says Tim, beaming. "Different races and

ARCANUM

Xenophobe.

If all else fails, use a hand grenade.

I can't help thinking I've seen this guy before somewhere.

Leonard Boyarsky, Tim Cain and Jason Anderson of Troica Games.

occupations will give you a whole new gaming experience because NPCs will react differently to you."

Your attitude in the game will also influence the way others view you. Obviously if you go around thinking that you're Charles Manson and mindlessly slaughtering everyone, you'll become so evil that no one will want to associate with you. And here's the best part, at the end of the game, if you're evil enough, you'll be able to ally with the game's chief bad guy rather than have to kill him. How's that for novel?

To round off the discussion, Jason tells us that you'll be able to build up an entourage of followers, who'll fight with you and even resurrect you if you die. As for the combat itself, Troika has included both a real-time *Diablo*-esque system, as well as a turn-based one for those who prefer to think about their encounters. There's also a comprehensive editor, which will enable people to make complex maps that can be played online.

I didn't have all that much time to play the game, and it's hard to form an opinion on a game with more than 60 hours of gameplay by playing for less than half an hour. And if Troika has successfully pulled off everything they told us about, especially the freedom of gameplay and NPC's varying attitudes towards you, depending on your playing style, then this could turn out to be one of the most engrossing RPGs of all time. We'll just have to wait and see.

DAY 5
Los Angeles, California
Blizzard
WARCRAFT III

⊙ Expected Release Date: Q4 2001

First up is *Warcraft III*, demoed by senior game designer Rob Pardo. At a glance it looks just like every other RTS we've seen since the likes of *Age Of Empires II*, but Rob is adamant that the game can stand out from the crowd due to its RPG elements. This is by no means a novel idea, though, *Warlords Battlecry* succeeded in combining the two genres (although it did fail dismally in many other areas), so we listen intently to see whether or not *WCIII* can offer anything new or just more of the same.

The campaign revolves predominantly around heroes, who will have their own set of statistics, such as strength, agility and intelligence. They'll command the troops around them, and can influence their abilities with auras – a type of sphere of influence, if you like. And all the experience points gained by these other units will be transferred to the hero, who can then improve in their given field (warrior, ranger, magician etc) as they gain levels. As Rob explains, "You'll be able to level up individual abilities, like in *Diablo II*, so it's up to you whether you want level two Command Aura or whether you want level one Command Aura and Raging Scream.

At this stage, none of us know what the different auras are, so Rob proceeds to demonstrate two of them. Raging Scream allows all units near

Having taken a long hard look at its previous titles, Blizzard has come up with some excellent ideas on how to make *WCIII* more user friendly. For example, certain spells from the previous games will now be automatic abilities. "We're going to implement the Sorceress's Slow ability, so she'll automatically cast it on any enemy units as they get close. In this way, there's far less micro-management for the player," says Rob. Needless to say, it's a clever concept, and could go some way to shutting up the whingers who constantly complain that in many RTS games, "There's so much to do and so little time to do it in."

WarCraft III comes with five races, Orcs, Humans, Demons, Undead and a yet to be announced secret race, but not even hardcore bribery can prize any details out of Rob as to what that race will be. The game runs on a 3D engine, although not the kind we're used to in *Shogun* or *Ground Control*. It's more of an isometric 3D, with no camera rotation, although Rob is quick to point out that extensive zoom functions are available.

With so many of the games we've seen so far on the trip being aimed at online gaming, we're eager to hear what's in store for the multiplayer options. "The multiplayer is still under development, but the idea is that we want to allow resource trading, so if, for example, you and I become allies, and you need some extra money to build a unit, I'll be able to give you that extra money," begins Rob. He goes on to tell us that you'll be able to transfer your favourite hero from the single-player campaign to multiplayer games, which guarantees plenty of hard-hitting action when veterans clash online, especially now that you can resurrect your fallen generals.

Although I didn't get to have a go myself, I saw enough to believe that *WCIII* is a positive step forward from its predecessor, and ideas such as being able to resurrect heroes,

WARCRAFT III

For those of you who haven't yet seen *WCIII*'s trailer, believe me, you're really missing out.

You'll have a wide variety of hero types to choose from.

Nilas Arcanister
Human Arch Mage

A hero's aura will improve the units around him.

Rob Pardo explains some of the finer points of *WarCraft III*.

> **Anyone who enjoyed the previous *WarCraft* games will love this, but with *Warrior Kings* just around the corner, I'm left wondering how well it'll be able to compete**

your commander to move much faster; Death Scream kills all nearby enemy units when your soldier dies. Unlike earlier *WarCraft* games, Rob assures us that you'll be able to resurrect your heroes at a temple, but only at a price. "Hopefully, this will stop people being overprotective of their higher-level heroes, especially in the multiplayer games. We found that this was a real problem with *WarCraft II*."

automatic abilities for certain units and the RPG elements could give it the edge over its closest rivals such as *C&C: Red Alert 2* and the *Warlords* series, especially with its breathtaking cinematics. When it arrives, I've no doubt that anyone who enjoyed the previous *WarCraft* games will love this, but with *Warrior Kings* just round the corner, I'm left wondering just how well it'll be able to compete for everyone else's attention.

DIABLO II EXPANSION PACK

Preparations were well underway for the hot coal walking championship.

You'll find yourself in a real battlefield straight from the offset.

Blizzard's Bill Roper loves games and big bears, apparently.

Utter carnage.

DIABLO II EXPANSION PACK: THE LORD OF DESTRUCTION

⊕ Expected Release Date: Q3 2001

Finally, it's the turn of Bill Roper, senior director of Developer Relations, to put the *Diablo II Expansion Pack* through its paces. Set just after the end of *Diablo II*, you find yourself in a Barbarian city at the foot of a mountain. Bill explains that Bale lives on, and having retrieved his soul stone, he's set off to find and corrupt the ancient artefact, the World Stone, which if successful, will enable him to bring his forces of hell through to the mortal realm. No prizes for guessing who has to stop him.

Bill explains that Blizzard's goal is to allow both newcomers and veterans to find something new to experience, and proceeds to show us the two new character types, an assassin and a druid. From what we're shown, it's obvious that a great deal of thought has gone into both. The assassin alone has 30 unique skills and spells, and specialises in martial arts and trap setting. Bill demonstrates an array of attacks which range from a simple sidekick to a life drain manoeuvre, as well as some spectacular spells such as Blade Sentinel, which allows you to send a group of spinning swords on a patrol route. He looks on proudly as he

sets an elaborate trap and lures enemies into it with the character's psychic abilities. It's made all the more impressive by the environment that he's playing in. All around, undead creatures battle with barbarians on a real battlefield which you're not only involved in, but can directly influence via your actions. "We wanted to create the feeling that you've just entered a warzone," beams Bill, "so that you actually feel like you're part of this huge battle in the Barbarian lands." From the looks of things, they've got it spot on. Next under the microscope is the Druid, who has two groups of spell-casting abilities, explains Bill, the first being

Elemental Spells, which unsurprisingly revolve around (you've guessed it) the elements. Among the ones I see are Fire Storm, a directed ground-running flame, not too dissimilar to *Diablo*'s; Molten Boulder – which sends a huge burning stone rolling towards your enemies; Cyclone Armour – guards you against elementals; and Erruption – opens up the ground beneath your opponent(s) and inflicts heat damage.

The second major spellcasting ability allows the Druid to summon creatures and plants, or shape shift into the form of either a wolf or a bear. It's obvious which is Bill's favourite, as he summons a giant bear to aid him, only for his smile to drop as it's instantly frozen by

⊕ In Barbarian city you'll meet lots of scary undead creatures like this on the battlefield.

> **Blizzard's goal with the *Diablo II Expansion Pack* is to allow both veterans and newcomers to find something new to experience**

an enemy. However, once over this small hiccup, it goes about mauling all comers, and proves to be a truly formidable ally. The wolf pack, while not as powerful, makes up for any weakness through sheer numbers and speed of attack. To finish off, we're talked through some of the plants that can be summoned, and fortunately there's not a man-eating chrysanthemum to be seen. Some of the most impressive ones include Cycle of Life, a collection of vines that destroy dead bodies giving you their mana and life, and Plague Poppy, which poisons your foes.

With a huge collection of new items to discover, such as helm types for Barbarians, shields for Paladins and magical orbs for the sorceress, as well as all the above modifications and improvements, I find it difficult to believe that *Lord Of Darkness* won't be a roaring success. We may not have been that impressed with *Diablo II*, but the battlefield setting of this add-on looks set to propel the game to new heights. Only problem is, you're going to have to wait till the autumn before you can get your grubby little hands on a copy. ⊞

Get ready to do battle, it's...
WARRIOR KINGS
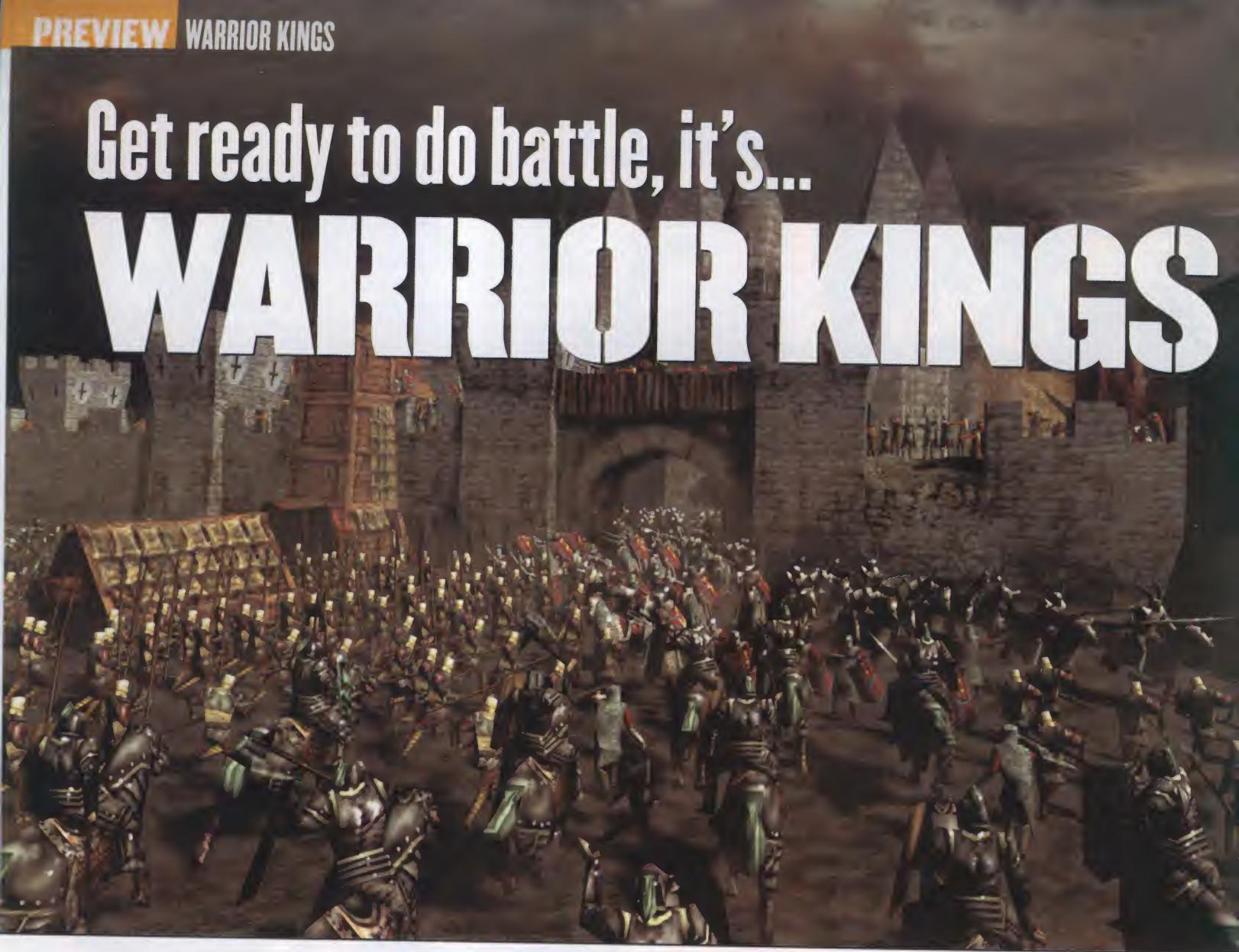
Total war, medieval style – that's *Warrior Kings*. Total prick, no style – it can only be *Richie Shoemaker*

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Black Cactus Games
PUBLISHER Sierra
WEBSITE www.blackcactus.com
OUT Summer 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- 3D real-time strategy
- Rather smashing graphics
- Resource management and tactics, in equal measure
- Emphasis on ease of use and depth of play

We all have preconceptions, especially when it comes to games. Whether they are formed just by reading the back of the box in your local high street games emporium, or by scanning through meaningless writer-obsessed words randomly cut-and-pasted into a magazine article, you will already have figured out – rightly or wrongly – what *Warrior Kings* is already about. Hell, even if this is your first encounter with the game, just by looking at the screenshots you should have a pretty good idea. I did before I met Steven Bristow and Charlie Bewsher of Black Cactus Games, and could sum what the game promised me in two words; *Shogun* (for me the best game of last year) mixed with *Braveheart* (the most ambitious of the year previous).

"Hopefully not *too* much like *Braveheart*," says Steven Bristow, project manager. "The great thing about *Shogun* was this epic sweep, with thousands of guys twitching across the landscape. But the economic aspect of what you might call a traditional RTS is a strength that *Shogun* didn't really have. It had an economic side to the game, but it didn't happen in tandem with the fighting."

"It's very important for us to keep the economics in real-time," says lead designer Charlie Bewsher.

> **"We're still getting used to the fact that we may soon have a real-time strategy game that is true to its roots; simple, intuitive, engrossing and thoroughly 3-D"**

"Without that, you can't use economics as a tool to help you win battles."

That was my preconceptions blown out of the water.

TOGETHER AGAIN

Actually they were obliterated an hour earlier, after being lead through the most recent build of Black Cactus Games' first PC title. Real-time strategy, of course, features heavily, so too does a rather impressive 3D engine. First impressions – *Shogun* meets *Braveheart* – were, I thought, fairly accurate. Equally you could throw into that bubbling mix *Age Of Empires* in 3D (with a mythical medieval twist, plus a few other arbitrary game references. I realised then that *Warrior Kings* was much more than a hybrid of two gaming ideals, only one of which was realised.

"We're not trying to do something revolutionary here," reiterates Charlie. "The core of the game is what you'll find in *Red Alert* or *Age Of Empires*, only we want to balance the need for strategic management with resource management and link the two in such a way that both are one and the same."

So what does that mean? Simple, it means that if you are outnumbered three-to-one on the battlefield, it doesn't necessarily follow that you will lose the war. Send a few of the necessary units off into the enemy hinterland, enslave a few villagers or plunder their supply lines and eventually the enemy's supply will become so stretched that they may retreat. Unlike *Shogun*, where one battle is played out in comparative isolation, in *Warrior Kings* you fight as much on the economic and resource front as you do the military.

This interdependence of economics and strategy runs parallel to the methods Black Cactus have employed to develop the game: AI, graphics and programming are almost being treated as one big whole, to such a degree that in place already are tools that let the

Lords of Midnight anyone?

"So, did anyone see The Bill last night?"

There is magic in the game, but not in the spellcasting sense.

Full 3D helps bring the world to life.

"Welcome to Wicker's World."

designers create their own routines, rather than place greater strain on the programmers. The end result is that, apart from anything else, *Warrior Kings* should arrive on time and new ideas can be tried out quickly and dismissed without months of programming work wasted.

WHAT YOU SEE...

Visually *Warrior Kings* is already impressive. Unlike *Shogun*, every unit is in 3D and even in the early version of the game we were led through hundreds of villagers, infantry and cavalry, and pieces of medieval machinery were seen milling around without putting much strain on the 3D engine. Units are colourful without being garish, scaled in such a way as to look both realistic without blending into the landscape and the animations, from trebuchets to winged demons, all looked as detailed and smooth as any you might see in a first-person shooter – the fact that potentially so many can be crammed into the one screen was almost too much to bear and, if nothing else, *Warrior Kings* will be as good to watch as we are

promised it will be to play. And here again we come back to that word, interdependency. Rather than have to refer to a manual to see how effective your units are, you will be able to see how they act and react, by *watching the game* rather than reading a list of statistics.

Charlie: "For instance, rather than set aggression levels for your units, their formation will dictate how they react. A wedge is an offensive formation and in that, your troops will be aggressive. In a circle your troops will be more defensive and the point is that you'll see what state your troops are in without having to refer to a separate screen."

Steven continues: "Unlike, say, in *Age Of Empires* where you press a button and pay some money to improve the global efficiency of all of your villagers, in *Warrior Kings* by seeing that a village has a windmill nearby, you immediately can see that your villagers are collecting food more efficiently. More experienced troops will visibly have better armour. More obvious but no less significant is that archers on top of a hill will have a better range than those at the bottom."

FACTUAL FICTION

In terms of the game's storyline, neither Steven nor Charlie were willing to let too much out at this early stage. Set in the mythical realm of Orbis however, what does sound intriguing is that, rather than let the player decide on one of a dozen different races and race through whatever technology will be exclusive to them, you start simply as human and along the way you can choose to either branch out and be closer to historical fact (building siege cannons and training legions of pikemen), or turn to the games' darker side and fight with demonic creatures. You can build wicker men within which you can sacrifice your villagers (or those snatched from our enemy) in order that the gods may grant you greater powers to enact your will.

But we can leave all that for another time. For now, we're still getting used to the fact that we may soon have a real-time strategy game that is true to its roots set down by the likes of *Command & Conquer*; simple, intuitive and engrossing, while at the same time thoroughly

3D without being disorientating and overly complicated. We've had many games that have favoured resource management over strategy, others that have swung the other way, but there have been all too few games that have embraced the two equally to such a degree. If the chaps at Black Cactus can walk like they talk, we are going to be in for another special summer indeed. **PCZ**

BLACK CACTUS

Based in Morden, at the end of London Underground's Northern Line, *Warrior Kings* is Black Cactus' first game. The core team, however, learnt many lessons while developing *Deathtrap Dungeon*.

1999 Eight people leave Eidos and – wouldn't you know it – Black Cactus Games is formed

2000 Sierra scoop the rights to publish *Warrior Kings* and unveil the game for the first time at ECTS in September. And we were there.

WIN! A MAMMOTH PC AND THE BIGGEST GAME OF THE YEAR TO PLAY ON IT

Courtesy of Microsoft and Packard Bell

That's right. The brand new *MechWarrior* game, *Vengeance*, stamps onto the shelves on February 2, and it's shaping up to be the best from the BattleTech boys so far. Not content with unleashing the game on a population still stuffed with the joys of Christmas, the kind old souls at Microsoft have teamed up with Packard Bell to give you the chance to win a *hulking* new PC and a copy of the game. And let's face it. After spending all your disposable income on beer, mince pies and sherry there's no way you're going to be able to afford to buy yourself a Packard Bell ixtreme 9100 PC, complete with a *gargantuan* Intel PIII 800MHz processor, a *thunderous* GeForce 2 graphics card, a *whopping* 30Gb hard drive, an *enormous* 17in monitor and a portly 128Mb SDRAM. What's more, it comes with a 12x DVD drive, firewire technology and a CD-Rewriter. All in, it's worth £1,500, and to top off the ensemble with a sizeable cherry you'll also get a copy of *MechWarrior 4: Vengeance* to test the machine to its blistering limits. Not only that, but nine lucky runners-up will receive their own copy of the game.

All you have to do is answer the following question, and pray that your postcard is the first one pulled out of Korda's competition drawer.

QUESTION: How many years has the BattleTech universe been around?

    A Ten minutes
    B Two years
    C 18 years
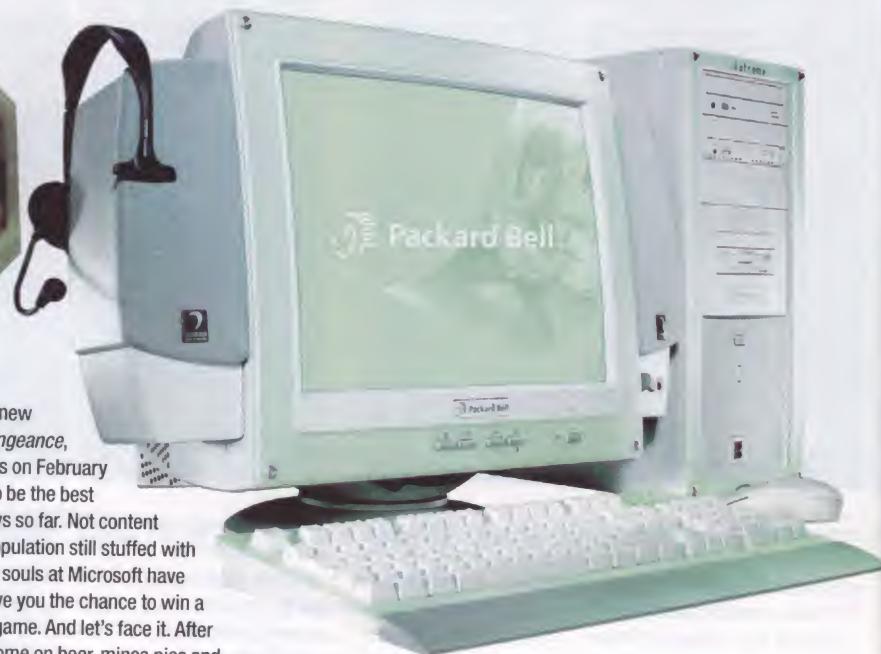
Packard Bell.

Just answer the question(s) and send them on a postcard, along with with *all* the information requested, to the address below:

● *Title, forename, surname, address, postcode, daytime phone number and your email address*
● *Please indicate on the postcard if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers from companies other than Dennis Publishing Ltd Ltd*
● *Please indicate on the postcard if you are under 18 years of age.*
● *Please indicate on the postcard if you are you a current subscriber*

Send your entry to: PC ZONE/Mechwarrior Competition CPCZ0102, Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford, BD1 5RZ. (Closing date: Thursday February 8, 2001)

● *Terms and conditions: Only entries with all the questions completed and received before the closing date will be entered into the prize draw. Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. And all that. Phew!*

PCZONE REVIEWS

Don't spend a single penny until you've checked out the *ZONE* reviews first – we'll tell you which games you've got to buy and which games to avoid

THE PC ZONE GAMES SYSTEM

This is the machine we use to review new titles on. Our reviewers also use older machines to get an impression of gaming in the 'real' world, but this is what we currently consider the best value-for-money set up. As games become more demanding, the specs will change to reflect that

A t the heart of the machine is a 600MHz AMD Athlon processor. These babies are seriously scorching, optimised for 3D applications, so first-person shooters fly like you wouldn't believe. Faster Athlons are now available, but at the current prices, this is probably the best value for money. The system bus runs at a godlike speed, so the whole thing is like a supercar with no brake pedal.

Supporting the processor is a MaxiGamer Xentor 32 from Guillemot, purveyors of all things graphicy. Based on the TNT2 chipset, these RAM-packed beasties are designed to cope with the polygons, textures and special effects that those game developers insist on chucking at the screen. Guillemot has a new GeForce 256-based card in the offing, which we're hoping to upgrade to soon.

Pionex has supplied the cases and 128Mb of PC100 memory for the motherboard. For gaming, especially with RAM prices as they are now, 128Mb is the optimum amount. The cases have room for expansion without taking up too much space.

Hard drive services are provided by the stunning 7,200rpm, 20Gb

Maxtor DiamondMax Plus (from the 5120 family of drives). It's large and fast with room for full installs and quick to load games when you want to play them.

Sound services are supplied by VideoLogic. The SonicVortex 2 card is a PCI device featuring Aureal A3D 2.0, ideal for gamers. The latest drivers are stunning, using the card's own chip to reduce the processing overhead on the CPU when calculating 3D audio. Aureal's API now handles not only sounds themselves, but also their reflections: as you approach a doorway, you can hear sounds from the room reflected into the corridor. Immersive stuff.

VideoLogic also supplies speakers from the superb Sirocco range. We primarily use Crossfires for gaming – they may seem expensive, but you get twice the quality you pay for. Four satellite speakers and a humungous subwoofer give pinpoint accuracy for 3D audio and bass meaty enough for the rumbliest explosions. We also use other speakers from the range (the original Sirocco and new Sirocco Pro) for sound-card testing.

Guillemot's DVD Theater set-up provides not only the ability to load games quickly, but also to watch DVD movies with its bundled MPEG decoder card.

Peripherals are supplied by Microsoft, from USB mice (top-notch for first-person shooters) to the full force-feedback monty – joysticks and driving wheels – and the ubiquitous SideWinder gamepads.

Last but not least, are headphones from Philips and fabulous 17in Brilliance monitors (107Bs). If you're used to cheap monitors typically bundled with new PCs, the crispness and stability of the image on these comes as quite a shock.

REVIEWS YOU CAN TRUST

We at *ZONE* pride ourselves on telling you exactly what we think. Our reviewers are the most experienced and talented in the business. They're all experts in their chosen genre, and won't pull any punches – if a game's not worth buying, we'll tell you why. But we don't leave it there. We want to know what you think of the games that come out, which is why we have our Feedback section on page 101. This is where you get the opportunity to put your point of view into *PC ZONE*.

CHECK THE SPECS!

The standard spec machine these days is a P233 with 32Mb of memory – but before a game you need to make sure it will work on your system. Because the tech specs on packaging can be a little optimistic, make sure you check out the We Say bit in our tech specs box. This is where we report on what we think the minimum tech specs should be. If a game runs like a tortoise on the machine listed by the publishers, we'll tell you. All the games reviewed are tested on the minimum-spec PC as quoted on the packaging.

ALL THE LATEST GAMES REVIEWED & RATED

MEET THE TEAM

All *PC ZONE*'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a fan of the genre

Which game(s) are you looking forward to this year?

DAVE WOODS
GENRE FPS, RPG, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Colin McRae Rally 2*

Duke Nukem Forever

RICHIE SHOEMAKER
GENRE RTS, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *B17 Flying Fortress: The Mighty Eighth*

Black & White

MARK HILL
GENRE Adventure, RPG, turn-based
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Tony Hawk's 2 and PGA Championship Golf 2000*

Duke Nukem Forever

MARTIN KORDA
GENRE Strategy, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *SoccerSim*

Freelancer and Black & White

GLADIATORS, ARE YOU READY?

⊕ **RINGSIDE** Richie Shoemaker

It's going to be an interesting year for the PC. Attacking in force from the east comes Sony's PlayStation 2, from the west next Christmas will be Microsoft's Xbox, both out to lock horns in the gaming arena and caught in the middle is the poor little defenseless PC. Some think this could be the end.

Well, it could be. After all £1,500 is a lot of money to spend on a machine used to play games. OK, so you can write letters, design posters, run your accounts, create songs or download a room-full of porn, but how many of us can really claim we use our PC other than to play games? It all seems a bit, well, wasteful.

On the other side of the argument, thanks to it's open-ended architecture, with new graphics cards, faster processors and bigger hard drives, in a year's time the PC will once again be the most powerful piece of games kit, with a price to match.

Looking back over the history of gaming you'll see that it's not so much about games machines as the games themselves. The Commodore 64 was technically superior to the Spectrum, the SNES to the Mega Drive and the Dreamcast to the PlayStation, but half the battle between each machine has been over games. People don't care how many colours or polygons can be pushed around the screen, they want great games and you only have to mention the words *Half-Life* or *Deus Ex* to turn faces green with envy.

What could happen with PC games is a focusing of game types. It's happened already with beat 'em ups and platform-style adventures, both types of games that consoles run on, while on PC you can count the number of new beat 'em ups on one finger – a good thing in my book. First-person games, real-time strategy, simulation and hardcore role-playing are never better than when played on a PC. I reckon it's going to be an interesting year, one definitely worth sticking around for.

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

90-100% Here at *ZONE* we score every game out of 100. If a game receives the impressive score of 90 or above, it is awarded the *PC ZONE* Classic award. These games are original, innovative, compelling and are worth buying even if you're not really a fan of the genre.

Z PCZONE CLASSIC

80-89% Games that score 80-89 get the *PC ZONE* Award For Excellence. These are excellent examples of their type of game – and if you're a fan of the genre, you should definitely consider buying the title.

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

70-79% Any games scoring between 70-79 have just missed an Award For Excellence, but don't ignore them. The score is well above average and that means you're getting a great title that's worth the investment if you're a fan of the genre.

50-69% Games that score in this region don't win any awards, but they're above average and well worth a look. If you're not a fan of the genre, though, they will probably offer limited long-term appeal.

20-49% These games are below average and you should really only consider parting with your cash if you're a big fan of the series or genre, or if you happen to see them at a hugely reduced price.

0-19% Games that score less than 20 should be avoided. They offer little in the way of long-term appeal, can be frustrating and definitely aren't much fun. If a game is seriously bugged, then it will also fall into this category. You have been warned.

PC ZONE PANTS

REVIEWS CONTENTS

Robot Wars in Mechwarrior 4: Vengeance.

IT'S A TOUGH CALL...

Under the *ZONE* scoring system, new games will have to be pretty spectacular to receive this award. They will have to take their genre to unprecedented new heights, and represent a major step forward for PC gaming. There are now very few titles that can justifiably be described as *PC ZONE* Classics. This trend will continue across all genres. Generally speaking, all *ZONE* Classics are must-have titles (the benchmark title being the definitive game of the genre), but that does not mean you should discount games that score 80+ per cent. These games receive the *PC ZONE* Award For Excellence and are essential buys if you are a fan of the genre the game fits into. Classics, on the other hand, are games we think will appeal to everyone and bring new fans to that particular genre. There will not be many of them. When we say a game is a *classic*, we really mean it!

Z PCZONE CLASSIC

CHRIS ANDERSON
GENRE RPG, adventure, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING EverQuest: Ruins Of Kunark

More EverQuest

STEVE HILL
GENRE Football, racing
CURRENTLY PLAYING Champ Manager 00/01

Champ Manager 01/02

PAUL PRESLEY
GENRE FPS, action/adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING Project IGI

Operation Flashpoint and Return To Castle Wolfenstein

KEITH PULLIN
GENRE Adventure/RTS
CURRENTLY PLAYING Champ Manager 00/01

Black & White and PGA Championship Golf 2001

JAMES LYON
GENRE Action/adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING Thief II: The Metal Age

Black & White and Duke Nukem Forever

PAUL MALLINSON
GENRE Action, RPG, turn-based
CURRENTLY PLAYING Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

Elder Scrolls 3 and Tony Hawk's 3

His name's Bill.

⬆ And this one's Ben.

MECHWARRIOR 4 –
VENGEANCE

⊕ £27.99 • Microsoft • Out now

Articulated walking tank: rhyming slang or implement of war? *Phil Wand* finds out

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

It only seems like yesterday that *MechWarrior 3* stomped its way into the *PC ZONE* offices, and yet here we are with a shiny new model, ready to cause death and destruction on a biblical scale. What can have changed to have made a great game even better? Quite a lot, actually.

For those who have missed this series of highly entertaining action blasters, *MechWarrior* is the first-person combat version of strategy game *BattleTech*, and FASA – the game's originators – are still involved at every level to ensure full *BattleTech* authenticity.

In this latest instalment, *MechWarrior 4: Vengeance*, you play Ian Dresari, a member of the

Royal House that rules the planet Kentaries IV. You have just returned home from the Clan Wars, only to find that most of your family has been murdered by a blood-thirsty faction of House Steiner. With only Uncle Peter and your sister Joanna surviving the massacre, your lot decide to open up the garage, get out the industrial size tins of Brasso, and get polishing the old BattleMechs.

WHO'S A PRETTY BOY THEN?

From the intro sequence onwards, the new game is a real treat for the senses. Visually, the buildings, installations and gun emplacements fit into the landscape so well, it actually seems a shame to reduce them to

molten rubble. Additionally, the vastly increased number of textures, combined with rolling landscapes of varied terrain, is a great improvement on the

> ## "The snow goes crunch, the marshland goes squish, and even the sand makes a peculiar sifting noise as you charge across it"

relatively desolate maps of previous versions.

The Mechs themselves are, as ever, beautifully animated, from their purposeful strut to the way they now lean into corners like giant dispatch riders. Certainly

the third person, out-of-body view is the most helpful for pilots, as not only can you goggle at all the detail, it's also a lot easier to work out which way your legs are facing – the way they go is the way you go.

When it comes to sound, the detail is equally impressive. The snow goes crunch, the marshland goes squish, and even the sand makes a peculiar sifting noise as

you charge across it. You can even see little puffs of dust kicking up from your size 34 metal sneakers.

Once you get into battle, which usually happens only a few seconds from the drop zone, the

sensual treat continues.

The enemy Mechs are altogether rather imposing as they stump, stump, stump over the land, their metal torsos twisting and buckling with such realism that any engagement becomes a rather sadistic feast for the senses.

As before, Mech components can be individually targeted, so if an enemy unit is giving you a hard time with an auto cannon, you can target the offending limb and take it out. This is aided by partial screen zoom, so you can be a true coward and keep a safe distance when doing so. That said, fighting ain't like shooting rats in a barrel: the intelligence engine is as good as before, if not better. Just as you're getting a warm sense of invincibility after the first few missions, you suddenly bump into

Perhaps a little too close for comfort?

Rocket packs allow you short bursts into the air.

Three, four, five... looks like it's time to run away.

An enemy Mech approaches and roasts my metal arse.

MechWarrior 4's Instant Action scenarios get you straight into a fight.

the big boys who really give you a working over. They're worryingly smart, and if you don't keep one eye on the radar the whole time, you can find them sneaking round behind you for a surprise attack.

MORE THAN JUST MECH

The *BattleTech* world consists of more than robots the size of movie theatres. As you might expect, the smaller units are a lot easier to deal with than the big ones, and so, if all else fails, you can always chicken out and run at small tanks instead (stomping them to death has a perverse satisfaction about it). Just don't try and stomp an enemy Mech,

because it won't work. For starters, you take only minor collision damage – he'll have to be very injured for that to be fatal – and, secondly, apart from the sound of crunching metal, you'll very quickly hear a volley of distressingly accurate arms fire, followed by the sound of someone reading out your obituary.

The one offensive enemy unit that seems a bit ineffectual is the chopper, which, although armed with a seemingly limitless brace of missiles, rarely seems to make them count. Even in groups they're exceptionally weedy, and you feel you could knock them out of the sky with an elastic band.

It's quite common to suffer more damage from being too close to helicopter crash sites than from the preceding combat.

Other than Mechs and tanks and aircraft, pretty much everything else you see is a valid target. For example, trees explode into a shower of twigs and leaves (it's not a particularly eco-friendly approach to gaming, we know, but running into them hurts and so they're better off out the way). Fuel trucks detonate with a spectacular foomph and a flash, and usually take any neighbouring units with them. The only odd thing is that the little people who inhabit the

MechWarrior world wander about, doing their daily business, entirely oblivious to the metal titans casting colossal shadows over their homes and gardens, and making their windows rattle. Only when you try and mash them with your feet or fire missiles in their direction do they look even remotely startled.

A GAME OF TWO HALVES

MechWarrior 4 has 30 single-player missions in total – ten more than the last instalment. Before each mission begins, you have to opportunity to tinker with your behemoth and organise your Lancemates. Weapon placement

IN PERSPECTIVE

Big robot games really are quite a peculiar breed. Enjoyed mostly by big Americans, they've never made the same impact over here. The *MechWarrior* series is undoubtedly home to all of the best titles in this genre.

MechWarrior 3

Starsiege

MechWarrior 4

⊙ WALKTHROUGH

DOES THE ENEMY HAVE SNOWBALLS?

- -

High up where the snow is always falling, Wandy guides his Mech through the pine forests...

1 Here we are shopping for Christmas trees (even if the fairy in the middle looks a little on the large side). But what's that noise I can hear in the distance?

2 Hm, that doesn't look like Santa. Let's have the bastard! Helicopters are easy prey, and don't require many hits to take them down in a ball of smoke and fire.

3 A patrolling enemy Mech draws alongside, and rotates his top half to have a closer look. Time to put down the mince pie and get down to business.

4 The only pressie he's going to get from me is one wrapped in hot green plasma. His right arm takes the brunt of the attack, rendering the weapon useless.

5 With metal limbs charred from the onslaught of enemy Mechs, we stand victorious. But hang on a second, is that a 'stomp, stomp, stomp' I can hear...?

Mechs flinch and reel when hit, and will run for cover when damaged.

Scrapping with several enemy Catapult class Mechs.

This one is just about to go to the great garage in the sky.

We have a lock, wave goodbye...

A pilotless Mech slumps sadly in the corner.

A large obelisk in the distance denotes your family's resting place.

The *MechWarrior 4* campaign takes you through arctic, alpine, swamp and desert scenarios, before a series of titanic clashes in an urban jungle. As you progress, you gain experience, and, more valuable still, you pick up bits of broken Mechs. These are added to the body shop optional extras for the start of the next mission so, if you come up against a low-slung sporty Mech that you fancy cruising around in, do your best to try and take it out, because, with luck, you'll be able to add it to your fleet. If you decide to keep your existing Mech, you can always opt for a fancy respray –

were able to participate in extensive online battles without any noticeable lag.

There are a variety of multiplayer game styles to choose from, with one of the most popular being Team Attrition, where you score points not only for killing the opposing team members, but also for damaging them within a set time limit. With some accurate targeting, you can leave them unarmed and shove them about in typical bully-boy style. Just remember that, when you finally do finish them off, they're going to respawn at full strength and be ever-so-slightly miffed.

Team Destruction, where the focus is on outright kills only.

DOES IT WALK THE WALK?

Although the controls are initially daunting (as with every other title in this genre), you'll find yourself stomping in no time at all. The graphics are fantastic, the missions are challenging, and the multiplayer options give you the means to finally sort out any friends who think they're made of tougher stuff. The only downside is the huge bite it takes from your hard drive – the minimum install is just shy of 500Mb, and the recommended install is over 1Gb. Er, ouch. PCZ

is more strictly controlled than in *MechWarrior 3* because, not only is overall Mech weight limited, but lasers will only fit specific laser mounting points, and additionally these points are restricted by size. A Mech might have plenty of free space overall, but if the space available isn't big enough nor is it of the right type, you won't be allowed out to crank up that nifty-looking Gauss Cannon. This might sound like too much restriction, but it does impose a certain level of balance right from the outset, and forces you to give your Mech a decent variety of weaponry.

Each mission starts with a briefing, and your Lancemates then introduce themselves

(presumably in a vain attempt to get you to stop shooting them by mistake), although you can skip straight past these bits if you're keen to get to the action.

After a brief cut scene, it's just a short stomp from the drop zone before you find the enemy or, as is usually the case, they come and find you. You'll hear calls from your Lancemates informing you they're taking fire but, apart from that, they keep pretty quiet. This is a pity, as we're sure they could provide more helpful information in many combat situations but, having said that, incessant jabbering would be a pain in the backside, so perhaps the strong silent type is best after all.

> **"Team based shooter fans are in for a treat. Fancy playing Capture The Flag in a hundred tons of metallic stomping machine?"**

although some of the pre-defined colour schemes seem to be inspired more by Salvador Dali than by camouflage.

Where *MechWarrior 3* concentrated on the single-player mission style of gaming, it unfortunately missed out on the growing multiplayer community. Microsoft has made sure that *MechWarrior 4* makes no such mistake. The multiplayer game engine is well designed and, even when using a regular 56K dial-up connection, we

If you're a fan of team based shooters, then you're really in for a treat. Fancy playing Capture The Flag in a hundred tons of metallic stomping machine? No problem! After the *Mech* experience, the Heavy Weapons Guy from *Team Fortress* games will never look intimating again. Other popular styles which are supported by the latest *MechWarrior* include King Of The Hill, where you score points for holding a specific point on the map for as long as possible, and

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 300 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card, DirectX 8.0, 500Mb+ hard drive space **WE SAY** 96Mb RAM and a Voodoo3 3000

PCZVERDICT

🔺 **UPPERS** Visually spectacular • Varied missions • Multiplayer is a real blast • Longevity

🔻 **DOWNERS** Eats your hard drive • Not a lot else

84 A stomp on the wild side

Watch out
behind you
and in front of you
and next to you
and under you
and&

Live the
experience

DELTA FORCE: LAND WARRIOR

⭐ £34.99 • Novalogic • Out Feb

"Right, anyone else want to try cutting down this tree?"

"I never touched it."

We all know why *Martin Korda* never joined the army. It would have meant having to cut his hair. The big girl

Bow your head for one short minute, as we pay tribute to what was once considered a ground-breaking movement in the world of 3D graphics. Today we see the passing away of the Voxel. Over the years it stood firm against the 3D accelerated revolution that swept the gaming world, causing everything other than the most powerful computers to chug away pathetically, as they tried to render its pointy and pixelated visuals. It leaves behind a legacy of no classic games, and subsequently will be missed by no one.

military to train its elite forces, and quite frankly if this is the case, then the American public should be genuinely worried. The landscapes aren't all that bad, in fact it's pretty rare that you get a game with 3D wide open areas in which you can freely roam around. *Project IGI* is the only other one that springs to mind.

DFLW's first major problem lies with its indoor locations, in which the frame rate feels totally wrong, even on the most powerful of machines. The animation has less fluidity than a cup of mucus, flickering to near epileptic-fit-inducing proportions in confined corridors. Then there's the

> ❝As a stealth/shooter, *Delta Force: Land Warrior* manages to do the job admirably. There's a huge scope for tactical variety❞

WHAT GOES AROUND.
So they've finally gone and done it, a *Delta Force* game in full 3D. Viva La Revolution. Or perhaps I should say Viva La Mutterings Of Mild Political Discontent, because unfortunately, it seems to have arrived with more of a whimper than a war cry. This third instalment apparently utilises the same engine used by the US

clipping. What the hell is going on with that? Kill an enemy and half his body disappears into the floor, even if it's made of stone, and sometimes, if you shoot someone on a slope, they'll hover in mid air as though they've fallen on level ground. It took me two minutes to notice these faults. How a group of play testers and the developers failed to spot them, after spending

several intimate months with the game, I'll never know. And if this really is the engine that the world's most powerful nation uses to train its soldiers, then quite frankly, God help America.

PUT THOSE GUNS AWAY...
It's not all bad, of course, far from it. As a stealth/shooter, it manages to do the job admirably. There's huge scope for tactical variety, which of course allows you to play each mission in a way that suits your playing style (you can even play from a third-person viewpoint, but it's not much cop). You're given a choice between five special-forces soldiers, each with their own specialist skill, stupid student-like nickname (Gas

"When was the last time you cleaned your ears?"

John's story that he was an AA serviceman didn't fool anyone.

If only he knew.

"I'm gonna have me some fun."

"The boy's gon' die."

Can, Longbow etc) and detailed description about their character and background. However, once you cut away the sob stories about their messed up childhoods and soul destroying previous professions, you find that what you've actually got is a choice between a demolitions expert, heavy gunner, martial artist, underwater demolitions expert, and a sniper. Unlike *TFC*, they can all carry any weaponry you care to equip them with, but obviously they'll be at their best when using their favoured weapon.

...SEE HOW POSITIVE I'M BEING?

DFLW has one of the finest arrays of military equipment we've ever seen, and in terms of variety, betters even *Counter-Strike*'s selection. Once again, your choice of hardware can be configured to cater for both your character's specialist skill, and your own playing style. If you're the kind of person who likes ripping off your shirt, dabbing on the war paint and screaming, "I am a machine" while running around your room with a plastic gun, then one of the several rapid fire heavy machine guns should satisfy your would-be-Rambo pretensions. However, if you've always fancied yourself as a bit of a Lewis Collins-alike, then you can stealthily creep round every level, taking your enemies down with a combination of silenced handguns and stealthy throat slitting knife action. For everyone else, there's a massive collection of assault rifles, with various add ons, such as grenade launchers and shotguns. There are even

three different types of sniper rifle, perfect for all you one shot wonders, and the physics are spot on as well. Try running while firing and you'll spray bullets everywhere other than where you're aiming. It's a shame then that the same can't be said for your character, whose every jump resembles a graceful ballerina-like prance performed under low gravity conditions.

Each weapon varies in terms of penetration, with several powerful enough to fire through walls, as well as through some enemies with just a single bullet. We'd never even heard of half of this stuff, like the Heckler & Koch P11 Underwater Pistol, which uses an electric charge to fire bullets. Best of all though, there's a bazooka, and you can't say fairer than that.

LEVELLING WITH YOU

In terms of levels, I have to say that they're hardly the most inspiring selection I've ever come across ranging from the Egyptian pyramids to oil rigs. Fortunately, many of them do include both indoor and outdoor locations, which makes for a vague amount of variation. The problem is everything looks too samey. It's like someone designed a small level, copied it and pasted it 50 times to make one big one, and then repeated the process.

To make matters worse, *DFLW* isn't exactly the most colourful of games either, and you soon find your eyes drifting on to more interesting things, like Ikea carpet swatches, just to give yourself something stimulating to look at. The graphics are sensationally dull, and the majority of enemies look more like inbred freaks than

Stay off the booze, man.

murderous terrorists. And while we're on the subject, most of them act with less intelligence than a brain damaged chimp. On one occasion I was lying on the ground with a terrorist stood directly in front of me. Guess what happened? Absolutely nothing. I could have started dancing in front of him and he probably wouldn't have reacted. On the flip side, when you are eventually spotted, they'll hunt you down, and on the harder difficulty settings, they're sickeningly

accurate shots, even from a distance. If there's one thing that's going in *DFLW*'s favour, it's that it's one of the most challenging games of its type. Just remember, you can only take a couple of hits before you die, and there are no power ups or med kits to pick up along the way to heal yourself with.

On the occasions where you work with other members of your squad, don't expect to have any control over them. As part of a team you're all given your orders from a central point, and you have to stick to your individual game plans.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

There's one thing that always saves Novalogic games from plunging into the mirky depths of mediocrity, and that's multiplayer. *DFLW* is no exception. Using the fantastic Novaworld server, up to 50 players can compete against each other on any one of eight different multiplayer game types, including Deathmatch and King Of The Hill matches. The best thing about them is that you don't have to be subjected to the dubious computer AI, while the wide open landscapes provide a perfect setting for some excellent fire fights and the Voice Over Net Communication makes the whole experience that much more immersive.

HONESTY IS A VIRTUE

Lets be honest, *DFLW* is no *Counter-Strike*. It's not even close. Neither does it measure up to *Project IGI*. However, the series does have a loyal following, and it's hard to believe that Novalogic won't have another hit on its hands, although if like me you've already played the game, it's hard to believe that they will. It's way too bugged, and the 3D engine leaves a lot to be desired. If you've got access to a network or you're lucky enough to own an ADSL line, then *DFLW* is more than worthy of your time. However, if you're looking for some great single-player action, then be prepared to be more than a little disappointed by a game, which could have been so much better, had someone bothered to invest more time and thought into it. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 266 **Memory** 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D Card **WE SAY** PII 400 and a 12Mb 3D card

PCZVERDICT

↑ UPPERS Superb multiplayer action • Large and varied selection of weaponry • Hugely challenging on the highest difficulty setting • Five characters to play as • Plenty of tactical freedom

↓ DOWNERS Dull graphics • Piss poor indoor animation • Erratic AI • Samey levels • Too many graphical bugs • Pathetic character physics

69 It won't blow you away

GETTING FORCEFUL

As there are several ways to play each level, we're going to try to give you a balanced way of completing mission one. If this fails, try carpet-bombing instead

1 Equip yourself with a long-ranged weapon. For real distance and accuracy try the Barret sniper rifle. Pick off any patrols from a distance, they'll never know what hit them.

2 Head into the Sphinx. Move either crouched or prone and watch your map. When the guards turn away from you, use a silenced weapon, like the MP5 to take them down quietly.

3 After clearing the Sphinx, move into the centre pyramid and do the same again. The final room holds the hostages. Take out the nearest terrorists with the MP5, and finish off the one on the far end of the room with your sniper rifle.

4 Well done, you've killed all the terrorists and rescued the hostages. The forces of evil are vanquished, and you've now got a heroic story to bore all your mates with.

ROWAN'S BATTLE OF BRITAIN

⭐ £29.99 • Empire Interactive • Out now • www.empireinteractive.com/BOB/

We all thought 'The Few' referred to the number of people in the world that play flight sims. That's why we called on *Dan Emery* to review the latest

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

The Battle of Britain. Probably one of the proudest moments in British history, which tends to leave most Americans with a vacant stare and a cry of "You Limeys did what...?" 'The Few' (about 800 pilots in total) stood up to the might of Germany and its air force, The Luftwaffe, in the summer of 1940 and although it could never be called a crushing defeat, halted the German advance and saved Blighty.

Ironically Rowan could also wear the mantra 'The Few'. They have released a total of three flight sims since 1995, the last one being almost two years ago. And, although *Rowan's Battle of Britain* is both a tribute to the men who fought all those years ago (and a reason for their existence), they sadly managed to miss the 60th anniversary.

But it was worth the wait. While not exactly ground breaking in either graphics or general gameplay, *Battle Of Britain*

> **❝You'll find yourself getting nailed every 20 seconds. Which is bloody annoying, but you keep finding yourself having 'one last go'❞**

actually captures something that almost every other flight sim fails to do. You feel like you're there. Admittedly, being a British game about British events probably has a lot to do with it. I was fairly nonplussed with *Microsoft Combat Flight Sim 2*, not because the game wasn't any cop (it was an excellent game) but because I don't really care that much about the Americans fighting the Japanese. Shooting down Messershmitts, on the other hand, is a different matter.

The game opens up with the usual Training/Action/Campaign options. Training, as you can guess, is the usual dull, tedious, learn to fly mode. The other two sections are where it's really at.

IN MY SIGHTS

Immersion. I talked about it earlier and if you really want to capture the feeling of being there, you need to play the game with difficulty levels set to maximum. Blackouts, troque, real flight models; turn them all on. It might make the learning curve a tad hard, but you get a feel of what it must have been like. And this is where you first discover that shooting down an enemy plane is damn hard. Your opponents don't stay still and have this really annoying habit of shooting back.

Needless to say, you'll find yourself getting nailed every 20 seconds. Which is bloody annoying at first, but you keep finding yourself having 'one last go' to see if you can nail them. And it's a great feeling when you finally do, although it's usually 4am by this time, and the alarm clock is looking at you going 'Ha ha, only three hours left to sleep before work!'

As well as the chocks away action, you can play the role of the bomber, although against serious opposition, this amounts to nothing more than airborne suicide. But when you're over the target and there are anti-aircraft shells going off all around you like black sunflowers, and Spitfires tearing over the top of the plane, you find yourself not just firing the machine gun, but yelling like a born again Christian with an attitude problem. It doesn't just feel like you're there, you are there...

Rowan has also added a campaign mode where you can either try to predict where the Germans are going to strike (if you're playing as the RAF) or choose targets to hit if you're playing the Germans. And this is probably the only real blight in this game because it's really overly complex – and not in a good way. Otherwise it would be a Classic.

It's not plane sailing. Groan.

A German 109 makes a desperate dash for home.

Fritz's vacation in Britain comes to a sudden end.

Delta Zulu Romeo, turn right now and report your heading.

Unescorted bombers are easy prey.

Somebody, somewhere, is going to have a very bad day.

"I can see your house from here."

When you look at how lush the actual flying graphics are, you really wonder why they put so little effort into this side of the game, which is where any real longevity is going to come in. The campaigns are divided into four segments and, although you can play through the entire campaign, this certainly isn't immediately obvious. The other major flaw is the inability to customise your controls. If you've been playing any other flight sim for some time you have to relearn the entire control system. To put so much thought into the look and feel of the flying part, and then to skimp on this side of the game is a serious oversight. Hopefully, after reading this, it might try to repair things in the shape of a patch, but there's nothing on the horizon at the moment.

All in all though, this is still one of the best flight sims we've seen to date, and will no doubt be played to death by some of the sadder individuals in the office (answers on a postcard to 'Daniel Emery and Paul Presley have no life' c/o *PC ZONE*). The multiplayer aspect is great, although it's restricted to a maximum number of eight players. An online server that could have supported 100+ players would have been a fantastic addition. The lack of thought in the campaign mode is also a big minus (and probably stops the game slipping into the uncharted waters of the Classic), but this game does everything else right. Definitely recommended for anyone into combat flight sims. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233 **Memory** 8Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D Card **WE SAY** PIII 450+ and an über 3D Card. Even a PIII 800 with a Voodoo 5500 struggles at the highest graphic settings.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS It's British! • It's a crowded sky • You get to shoot Germans • Flight Models 'feel right' • Never a dull moment

DOWNERS Up close to the ground is a little suss • Buildings look like lego • Loading time still sucks • Campaign mode not intuitive

89 Rowan's finest moment

IN PERSPECTIVE

In the same way that WWII was the pinnacle of piston engined flight (before the arrival of the jet) *Rowan's Battle Of Britain* is probably the summit of the current generation of flight sims. The arrival of the new breed is just around the corner with titles such as *WarBirds III* and *IL2*, but, until then, *Rowan's Battle Of Britain* is probably the best you're gonna get.

Rowan's Battle Of Britain

WarBirds

Aces High

Combat Flight Sim

THE REAL COSTS

The not-so-glorious truth about the Battle of Britain...

Although the real Battle of Britain has gone down in legend, the actual event was a horrific experience for the men and women involved, not to mention the loss of human life. On the final day of the Battle (the air war raged on for another five years) the loss on each side was enormous. The RAF lost 544 pilots with many times that number killed on the ground. The exact losses on the German side will never be known, but it was on a par with the British. After the Battle was over, Hitler exacted revenge on the British and the Blitz raged for more than a year. The rest, as they say, is history...

Spare a thought.

"For you Tommy ze var ist over..."

eek! eek! eek!

Moo-oooo...

Howl...

Yap, yap, yap, yap, yap, yap...

Woof, woof, woof, woof...

Baaaa, baaaa.... (squelch).

SHEEP

⊙ £29.99 • Empire Interactive • Out now

Shear enjoyment, or just plain baaaad?
Keith Pullin puzzles it out...

Well, it had to happen sooner or later; someone watched *One Man And His Dog* and was inspired. They heard the words "Shep's gone a bit wide..." and thought: "Yup, we'll make a game out of that."

Now, there are many different guises a PC gamer can assume: adventurer, soldier, footballer, pilot, even terrorist or assassin. But shepherd?! Is anybody remotely interested in being a sheep herder? Developer Mind's Eye Productions apparently thinks so.

Sheep is pure console zaniness; the idea of herding a flock of sheep astronauts back to their spaceship so they can return home is plainly ridiculous. Get into the spirit of things though, and you might find yourself having fun.

A WORLD OF SHEEP
The game is played over seven worlds with four levels on each.

The landscapes range from basic farmyards to enormous intergalactic spaceships. Gameplay draws from numerous puzzle-based console titles, such as *Goof Troop*, *Frogger* and *Bomberman* and is surprisingly addictive. The way these loveable, but oh-so-stupid sheep are portrayed allows them to instantly tumble into the affections of all but the most cold-hearted of PC gamers.

The poor little lambs get crushed, boiled, blown up and blow-dried on a regular basis.

66 Brand new killing devices encourage you to sacrifice just one sheep so you can giggle at poor Flossy's senseless demise 99

Like *Lemmings*, this is the kind of game that can throw up a brand new killing device and encourage you to sacrifice just one sheep so you can giggle at poor Flossy's senseless demise. At the other end of the emotional scale, when a cow driving a steamroller crushes your entire flock there's an incredible sense of loss.

Players can choose to herd as one of four different shepherds. There's Bo Beep, the sheep loving rock star; Adam Half Pint, the sheep hating private eye; Motley, a pet dog who dreams of being a sheepdog and, of course, Shep, an ageing sheepdog who's looking for one last challenge.

The actual skill of herding the sheep around the obstacle-ridden mazes is exactly how you would imagine it: you run around one side of the flock to get it shuffling off in the other direction. Simple in theory – but not so simple in practice.

Once you've mastered the controls, you can guide your woolly friends into a vast selection of power-ups providing extra points, access to secret levels and bonus sheep – and you can never have too many sheep. Why? Because a minimum of ten sheep must reach the exit in order to complete the level. More importantly, the number of sheep you leave one level with is the number you start with on the next. It all adds up to some frantic herding and some genuinely enjoyable moments.

QUICK BUZZ
Ultimately, the novelty factor wears off quickly. Admittedly, it remains longer than it has any right to, but problems such as sheep getting stuck eventually take their toll. It's also quite a short game, which means dedicated shepherds shouldn't have problems completing the game in a day or two.

The chances are most people will prefer to spend their cash on something with a bit more depth and lasting appeal. Still, when it comes to family entertainment, you could do a lot worse. ▐PCZ▌

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** PII 300, 64Mb RAM

IN PERSPECTIVE

No other game focuses on actually herding sheep, but there are other light-hearted puzzlers that can offer similar short-term relief.

Tanktiks

Lemmings

Sheep

PCZ VERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Simple, addictive fun • Only shepherding game we know of • Lots of dastardly sheep killing devices
⊖ **DOWNERS** It's a shepherding game • Fairly short-lived • There's a lot of luck involved

61 Cute and cuddly. For a while
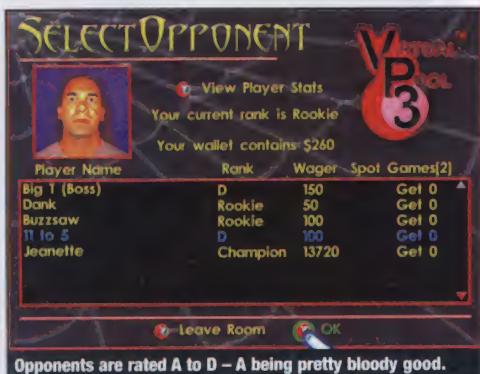
Opponents are rated A to D – A being pretty bloody good.

A tournament can be as long or as short as you want it to be.

Looks like this game of pocket billiards is not going too well.

CALL SHOT
Select Ball And Pocket

Some games require the calling of a shot – where you have to nominate the ball and pocket.

Gently swing the mouse and make your shot... Mmm – that feels good!

VIRTUAL POOL 3

⭐ £29.99 • Interplay • Out now

Another load of old balls, thinks *Paul Mallinson*. But how shiny they are...

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

All it needs is some beer stains and cigarette burns to make it authentic.

It's been more than couple of years since we last saw Interplay's classic pool sim updated on PC. *Virtual Pool 2* was a classic of its time – combining clarity and simplicity in spooge-worthy quantities – so it remains to be seen what Interplay could do to better it. If the physics, graphics and options are all there you've got to ask yourself the question: are we simply buying the same game all over again?

WE LOVE JEANETTE
Thankfully, the answer to that question is no. Interplay, or rather: the developer, Digital Mayhem, is cleverer than we anticipated and has included a number of new features that we see as a plus. First off, this game is endorsed and presented by world-famous WPBA pool chick Jeanette Lee. No big deal, you may think, but Jeanette's presence is both appealing and useful in equal measure. There are numerous video clips in which this fit, young oriental lady gets to quip you about your performances (oo-er missus!) and demonstrate techniques used by professional pool players to help you enhance your game. These videos are actually extremely well put-

together, using Sky Sports-style graphics to explain ball motion, and will be a godsend to novice pool players. They should also help with anyone's game in the real world too – such is their usefulness.

SOCIAL GAME
The second main improvement is on the multiplayer side of things. In this day and age we expect to be able to play most games online, and *Virtual Pool 3* is incredibly easy to play against other humans across the Internet. Using a free program called GameSpy Arcade

"As you get better you become less worried about betting large sums of money against the *crème de la crème* of *VP3*'s opponents"

you can hunt down *Virtual Pool 3* games quickly and easily, then challenge like-minded players to take you on. There are few lag problems when playing over a 56K modem connection, so games are smooth and flow properly. And, if you can't find someone who's playing the type of game you want to play, you can set up a challenge yourself. Even easier, though, is playing a multiplayer game

around one machine with a load of mates. *Virtual Pool 3* really is an excellent multiplayer game – just like the real thing.

LONER'S GAME
Moving away from the multiplayer side of things for the moment, it must be said that *Virtual Pool 3* is also the ideal game for those without any friends, because there are literally hundreds of single-player options too.

The most important single-player game is Career mode. In this you create a player and take them on a money-winning tour of six themed pool halls. Starting off
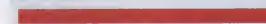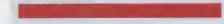
The graphics are slightly better in *VP3* than in *VP2*. Look at the shine on those balls!
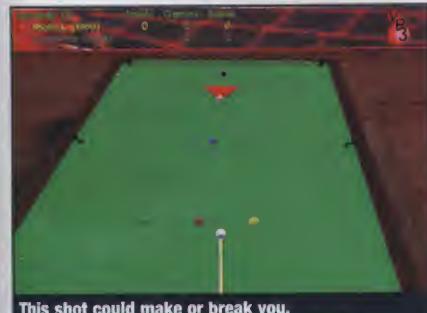
This shot could make or break you.

Unlock other pool halls by beating 'boss' characters.

If two balls don't hit a cushion after a break, it's a foul.

Some opponents even make mistakes off the table...


Using GameSpy Arcade you can host or join multiplayer games.

There are three pre-set tables (Am, Pro and Championship).

PLAY BETTER POOL

Believe it or not, *Virtual Pool 3* can actually improve your game in the real world. Jeanette Lee shows you the basics, plus a few advanced techniques, in a series of excellently-produced training videos. Here's a taster of what you can learn...

Finding the right contact point on the target ball is crucial.

Hitting the cue ball at the bottom causes 'draw', apparently.

And hitting the top causes 'follow'.

With practice you can determine where the cue ball ends up.

Clever graphics show how movement is passed from one ball to another.

Jeanette humiliates her guinea pig opponent for our learning pleasure.

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with only $50 and access to one pool hall, the idea is to play your way through an ever-changing field of computer opponents, winning money, beating 'boss' players and unlocking subsequent pool halls in the process. Early opponents are easy to beat, but wager little money on their games. Later opponents wager thousands on every game, though, and are capable of fleecing you of all that you've earned. As with most things in life, success at *Virtual Pool 3* is linked directly to practice and confidence. As you play more games you get better at judging angles and delivering

power, and as you get better you become less worried about betting large sums of money against the *crème de la crème* of *VP3*'s computer opponents. Spending days building up your winnings, only to lose in one game is a sickening feeling, so you're advised to put in plenty of practice before attempting to beat them.

As well as single-player Career mode there's also a Tournament option (which can have up to 32 computer/human opponents in a knockout competition for a trophy), Quick Play (a one-off game – perfect for those with menu-itis), and a

Trick/Setup Shot mode (which loads a pre-made pool situation).

IN THE PUB
In total there are 18 different types of pool games on offer, two billiards games and a proper snooker mode. Just like in *VP2*, *VP3* features English Pub rules pool, so will appeal to UK game players. And those looking to broaden their pool horizons will be able to indulge themselves in 10-ball; One pocket; Bank pool; 6-ball; 3-ball; etcetera, etcetera – every game of pool imaginable (except, for some strange reason, Killer, which was in *VP2*). Unfortunately, the developers chose not to include any help with the rules for all these different games, so on occasion you won't know what's going on if you're playing a game the rules of which you're not familiar with.

ADDICTIVE STUFF
Despite this oversight *VP3* is a must-have title for pool fanatics. The graphics, ball physics and sound are absolutely spot-on. There's little or nothing to criticise. Most importantly, *VP3* feels great to play and the keyboard/mouse control system is extremely intuitive. It's addictive stuff, too – especially when you get a taste for money in Career mode. And there's always the chance to take on Jeanette if you match the $13,720 it takes to play her. Beat her and who knows what might happen? She might do a striptease video for the lucky player... We have yet to find out.

What we do know though, is that Interplay has undoubtedly buffed-up the balls even more with this update, and that, as pool games go, VP3 is second

only to the real thing – the biggest compliment we can pay it. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor 233MHz **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card, 200Mb hard drive space **SUPPORTS** Everything imaginable **WE SAY** OK, but some jerkiness

PCZ VERDICT

● **UPPERS** Perfect physics • Clear, crisp graphics • Excellent training videos • Good multiplayer game • Fine controls

● **DOWNERS** Lack of help with rules • Internet play should be built-in • Chunky menus

85
Plays a great game of pool

BATTLE ISLE: THE ANDOSIA WAR

★ £34.99 • Blue Byte • Out now

Andrew Wright's too old for RTS and too stupid for turn-based stuff so we gave him a blend of the two – *Battle Isle 4*…

My ideal strategy game – aside from pornographic Patience, of course – would be something with the pace and exhilaration of *Red Alert* with the immersive 3D graphics of a game like *Ground Control* and the depth and replayability of a resource management game like *Civilization*. Nice idea, huh?

Meanwhile, back on earth, Blue Byte has tried hard to make the fifth incarnation of its seminal *Battle Isle* strategy series into what they call the definitive 'conflict simulation'. If the numbers confuse you, *Battle Isle 4: The Andosia War* is actually the fifth instalment because the one-time classic *Incubation* continued the same storyline at a squad-level game.

But wait, according to Blue Byte, it has announced a new genre. *Battle Isle 4* is certainly a big step forward in strategy game terms. It combines real-time and turn-based elements in a fully-rendered and textured 3D world. So how on earth does it manage that? Well, the economics of the game – mining resources and creating useful things like tanks, planes and ships is done in real time with no let-up at all. However, the bomb-blasting, bullet-bouncing bits are strictly turn-based. This is achieved by giving you forever to sort out your economy, but only a finite amount of time to move and fire your units before your opponent gets his, her (or its) turn.
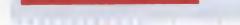
You get anywhere from a couple of minutes to quarter of an hour, depending on the scenario and settings, to do what has to be done. During your opponent's turn, you switch back to your base and manage your economy. It sounds weird, but it works, sort of.

BATTLE TACTICS

The plot pits the forces of General Bratt against a sect called the Children of Haris, but that's irrelevant as both have the same weapons and tactics anyway. Whichever side you play, you start out with an 'economic' island and a 'battle' island which helps you get used to the two intertwined elements of turn-based and real-time gameplay. Eventually the distinction blurs as you'll soon end up either defending your base or invading someone else's.

The combination of real-time and turns works well enough. What causes initial problems – but what eventually makes the game so good – is the 3D element. *Battle Isle 4* was created in 3D twist-and-spin-around 'whizzovision' and it takes some bloody mastering, I can tell you. It can even give you a stomach-churning dose of motion sickness if you overdo it.

You control an amazingly flexible camera that can zip up overhead for a bird's eye view of the landscape or zoom in close and get right among your soldiers and vehicles. You can rotate at any angle, examine any terrain and even scout the whole map. You won't see enemy units until they reveal themselves but you can at least plan your next moves.

With a reasonable PC and a decent graphics card, the results are impressive. The landscape and buildings are a real delight, as are the vehicles and men. You can even zoom in and see the paint peeling from the flamethrower soldier's back-mounted tanks. The turn-based nature of the battles doesn't give you the same atmosphere as say *Ground Control*, with all its burning wrecks and continuous explosions. In *BI4*, you're treated to some good firing sequences and explosions, but only for a second or two. You can get an idea of the detail involved by zooming in next to a missile-equipped Buggy – you can even make out the red and white squares on the missile as it launches.

Better still are the incredible weather effects – and they're not just for show. Rain and snow and darkness severely restrict your options, so planning an attack means keeping as much of an eye on the weather forecast as on the clock.

The game has 40-odd units and 25 different buildings, each upgradable in up to four steps. Admittedly, most result in simple increases in productivity but it does require some intelligent research decisions rather than blindly following the obvious paths.

IN ESSENCE

The essence of the game revolves around three resources – aldinium, iron ore and water – but it's essential that each building is kept on the 'energy net' either by building close to others or by ERP, or energy relay posts. Also, buildings have to be connected by pipes before they function and these have to be laid manually. Just to give you something to do, of course.

The first few hours of frustration – and the tenth time you end up looking at a particularly well-rendered stretch

Back at home base the graphics are outstanding.

IN PERSPECTIVE

A new genre leaps into play. It doesn't have the atmosphere of *Ground Control* or the sheer playability of *Earth 2150*. Nor does it have the depth of *Civilization* and the like. But, for thinking gamers, the best of both worlds is just about good enough.

Ground Control

Battle Isle 4

Earth 2150

Imperium Galactica II

LINES OF COMMAND

The arc described by the thin purple line, which is activated automatically or by pressing the Alt key, shows the units range of vision while the thin yellow arc shows weapon range and the red line picks out targets in range. The thick red line shows the furthest a unit can move while the dark blue area delimits positions to which the unit could move if it wanted to keep its one remaining shot. Move beyond that and it won't be able to attack – or defend in the next round.

Looks like a good kicking for the Vulture…

…but things can get complicated in night battles.

A ground-level view of your home base can be pretty impressive.
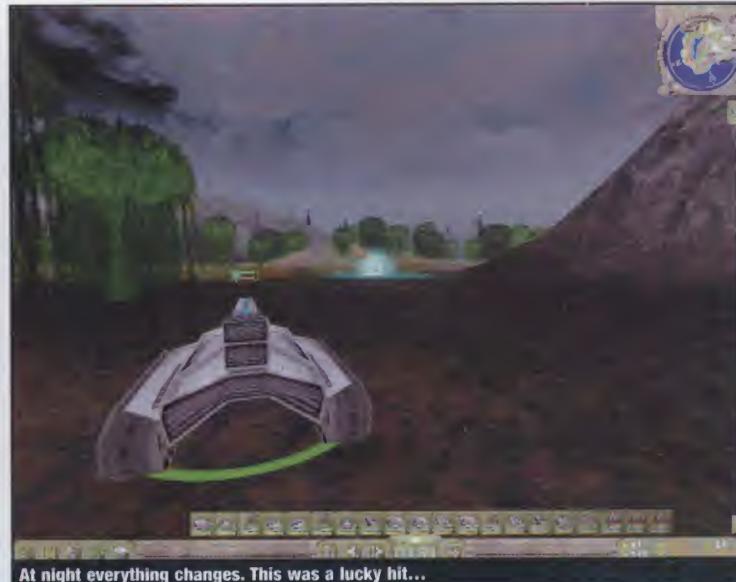
At night everything changes. This was a lucky hit...

Weather plays a big part – it affects solar power levels, visibility and movement. And the rain spoils your view too.

Each building can be upgraded to produce more. Did I build all that? Really?

Real attention to detail – the missile can be seen leaving the Buggy's launcher.

of empty ocean or a deserted mountainside – will almost certainly have you twiddling with all the graphics and control settings to slow down or speed up the mouse and try and inject some sort of sanity.

Fear not, there are loads of twiddlable options to lose or gain game speed and, after a while, the interface will become second nature. Especially if you use the four camera memory settings and the Control and Alt keys which slow the camera down to tolerable settings. The main problem is that below-average PC

owners can get lulled into a false sense of security – a game on a 400MHz Celeron with Voodoo 3 card appeared to whip along – until about 20 enemy units appeared in range and the game

> **❝ The first few hours of frustration will have you twiddling with all the control settings to try and inject some sort of sanity ❞**

quickly became unplayable. Back to the options and game settings panel... On the other hand, the same game on a 500MHz Pentium zipped along and hardly stuttered.

Back in the game, there are two campaigns to play with 23 missions between them. How well you do in one reflects directly on the subsequent ones, so you

Only the obvious control problems still remained with the camera swinging wildly about from one side of the island to the other. That is, until I got used to it, of course.

can find yourself reverting to save games more often than you'd like. You can also attempt network games against the computer but these bear no relationship to the main plot.

And, of course, this being the multiplayer day and age, there is the possibility of playing up to four players on each of two sides, via Blue Byte's own server. It wouldn't let me on, but then I did only have a review copy of the game. Miserable bastards.

The AI might have one or two problems. Its transports once ended a move well inside range

of my tanks. Result: no more transports. But that aside, *BI4* is a generational leap ahead in terms of strategy games. It's involving, clever, addictive and even fun. *Ground Control* has atmosphere, other games have depth. *Battle Isle 4* is brilliant. Flawed, but brilliant. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 300 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** Win 95 or better and a 2nd generation graphics card (Voodoo 3 or better) **WE SAY** Get real. PIII 500 to stay sane. Anything less looks fine to start with but slows down when lots of units come into play

PCZVERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Incredible graphics and camera angles • Well-thought out units • Technology and economics • Neat storyline, utterly absorbing

⊖ **DOWNERS** Linear and artificial gameplay • No scenario editor or random maps, frustrating interface • Tedious resource management

84 Flawed brilliance

A deserted battlefield. Yesterday.

Look at that detail – even the flamethrower's tanks look battered. Even though I've just built the bugger...

phenomenal a. extraordinary; unique, amazing, fabulous: n. *the sensational.*

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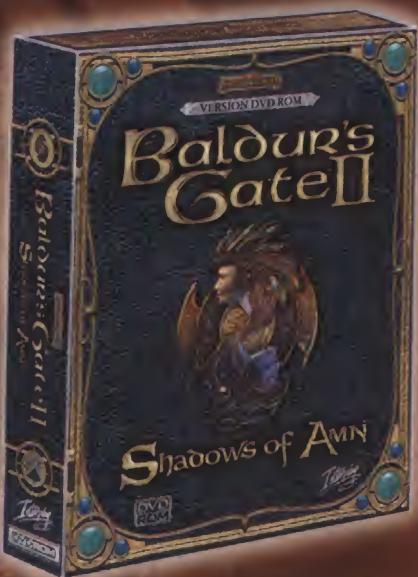
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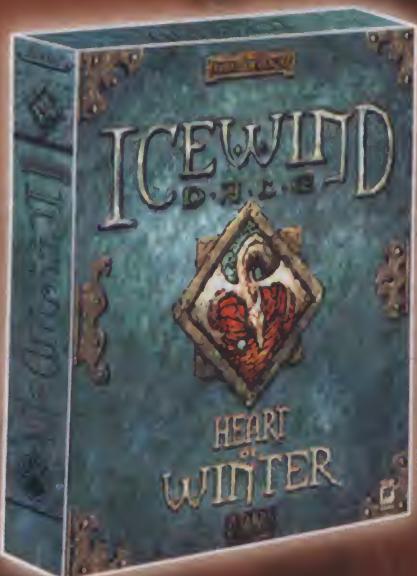
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Miles of open land and they have to drive through someone's village.
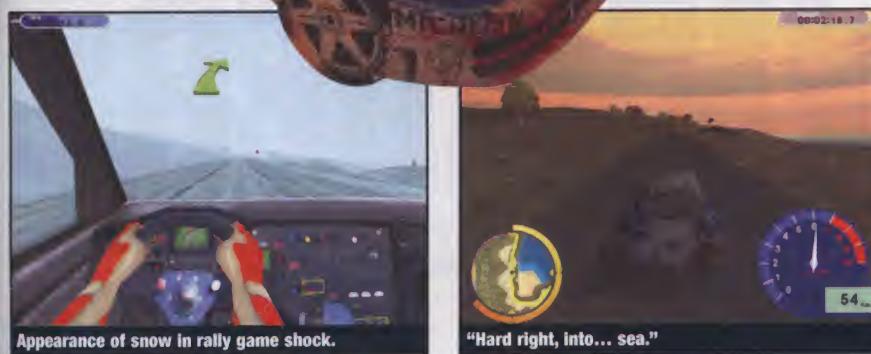
Appearance of snow in rally game shock.

"Hard right, into... sea."

Looks like rain again.

PRO RALLY 2001

⭐ £29.99 • Ubi Soft • Out now

Yet another rally game appears for the PC, and yet another weekend is ruined for *Steve Hill*

How's this for timing? The greatest rally game of all time has just elbowed itself onto the shelves, so Ubi Soft attempt to take it on head to head with an unproven, unlicensed and – if we're honest – unremarkable game. Commercial suicide? Quite possibly, although cynics may

> **What do we care? It's another game to plough through before dismissing it as not worthy to change Colin McRae's tyres**

suggest that it's a cunning move, latching onto the coat tails of *Colin McRae* in an attempt to ensnare undemanding gamers and confused parents. Given the wholly random nature of game development, it's just as likely to

be mere coincidence. But what do we care? All it means to us is another rally game to plough through for a couple of days before dismissing it as not worthy to change Colin McRae's tyres.

So let's make a start. Rally is as rally does, and *Pro Rally 2001* is therefore packed to the roof with the usual homogenous ingredients: Toyota Corollas, Peugeot 306s, Australia, Finland, easy lefts, hard rights, static spectators, clouds of dust, specks of rain, tweaks of suspension, yadda-yadda-yadda. Our recent announcement that the rally

genre hadn't yet reached the farcical state of Grand Prix games would appear to have been bogus, as there are now more off-road games than you can shake a windscreen wiper at. To the untrained eye, they're all the same, blurring into one long 3D-accelerated powerslide.

EYE EYE

Fortunately, our eye is highly trained, and it is therefore with a degree of indifference that we proclaim *Pro Rally 2001* by no means the worst rally game on the PC, but some distance behind the best. Graphically, it's roughly as good as your system allows, with the usual landmarks looming up in time-honoured fashion. The sound is the usual hoover effect, with the co-driver barking out instructions over the din. There is some attempt at originality here, as Ubi Soft are claiming to have invented the first-ever intelligent co-driver. It would appear that this refers to him shrieking "Come

on!" when you could be going faster, a world away from the clipped professionalism of Nicky grist, the perennial occupant of McRae's passenger seat. Depending on your frame of mind, it's a nice touch or an irritating gimmick, neither of which present a convincing argument for a consumer purchase.

SCHOOL'S OUT

In other features, *Pro Rally 2001* enables you to hone your skills at a driving school, success at which then opens up the first of three sequential championships, with 15 officially licensed cars to tear through. The arcade mode involves getting the better of nine other ghost cars, and if anything is slightly on the difficult side, the game not being interesting enough to warrant ascending the learning curve.

Pro Rally 2001 is by no means a hateful piece of shit, and it's unfortunate that this review has fallen to someone who has spent the preceding weeks sunk up to the nuts in *Colin McRae*. As we iterated then, ultimately, it all comes down to handling. *Pro Rally 2001* feels like playing a game. *Colin McRae rally 2.0* feels like driving a car (probably).

IN PERSPECTIVE

There's plenty to choose from, with some perfectly acceptable titles available. One stands out from the crowd though, and its name is *Colin*.

Colin McRae Rally 2.0

Rally Masters

Rally Championship

Pro Rally 2001

PCZ VERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** The usual rally gubbins • "Intelligent" co-driver

⊖ **DOWNERS** Adds little to the genre • Simplistic handling • Unresponsive handbrake

60 Colin. Colin. Colin

A retro-modern '50s design...that's about the limit of my architectural knowledge.

A wacky cartoon isn't complete without a man-eating plant. Discuss.

STUPID INVADERS

⭐ Ubisoft • £34.99 • Out now

To contrast the title of the game, we thought we'd get the most intelligent writer we've got to review it. He wasn't available, so here's *James Lyon*

When Santa got stuck up the chimney, he began to melt...

What do we want out of adventure games these days? More than we really expect, but I suppose that the ability to rise to the challenge of solving progressively harder logic puzzles in order to advance an intriguing plot is probably one of the central requirements. What we don't want to see in an adventure game is a series of cartoons interrupted by a handful of spoon-fed puzzles that do as much to stimulate the mind as a *Live & Kicking* interview with Westlife. But it's a case in point that needs to be detailed further, so scan on, dear reader.

No point in delaying it any further: it's nowhere near as good as *Monkey Island*. There. Might as well get that out of the way. For a series that's seen as the peak of adventuring finesse (if you squint a little at the third one) it's a pity that *Stupid*

🔼 His name's Bolok. Bolok? Like a testicle! Ahahahaha!

Invaders gets released at the same time as *Escape From....* Then again, if it wasn't there wouldn't be a better chance to hold it in comparison to how things should be done in today's barren adventure climate. Just let

it be said that the recent fourth game yanks *SI*'s trousers down, pointing and laughing before it can even get onto the podium.

A RUBBER CHICKEN WITH A PULLEY IN THE MIDDLE

Plot and character – a factor that means the world in this genre – aren't put to full use. The five characters you get to control, distinctive though they may first appear, are grossly underused. There's comparatively little dialogue and the situations each character finds itself in could be said to be predominantly interchangeable. Besides, there's no need to switch between each to solve a certain puzzle and nothing that requires a specific talent. So what's the point? What's disappointing is that *Stupid Invaders* looks great. You'd expect so too, since the four CDs take up 2.8Gb of space on full installation. The off-set angular backgrounds and vivid characters give it a look reminiscent of LucasArts' classic *Day Of The Tentacle*, while the

animation of the in-game 3D characters blends in seamlessly with the numerous cut-scenes. And, I'll genuinely admit, I did find it funny in parts. The humour's generally in the vain of *Ren & Stimpy* slapstick; indeed, any game that manages to kill Santa Claus in the first ten minutes is worthy of a few laughs. It's just unfortunate that 'few' is the most significant word.

Y'see, readers, *Stupid Invaders* is rather a short game. Of course, I've got nothing too much against short games. I completed the first *Monkey Island* in two days (I thank you) and still consider it one of the best games ever. It's more to do with what makes the game short. Put it this way: do you remember those interactive children's storybooks? The ones where if you clicked on any of a large number of objects on the screen, you'd receive a funny, albeit non-productive, little animation. Sure they were for kids, but you couldn't deny it was enjoyable clicking on everything to see what it did. Well, compared to those, *Stupid Invaders* is positively anorexic.

Move your mouse around the screen and the most you're going to get are one or two hotspots

essential to progress jumping out of the detailed backgrounds. While it's all well and good, avoiding frustrating the player too much, it often feels like we're being led by the hand throughout.

IN PERSPECTIVE

If you haven't already, seek out a copy of *Toonstruck*. You can get it for less than a fiver nowadays and it's well worth it – although if that's anything to go by, *SI* will be the same price in a couple of months. If you really care, pick up a copy of something like *Arthur's Teacher Trouble* just to get an idea of what they should do with those colourful backgrounds.

Stupid Invaders
▬▬▬▬

Toonstruck
▬▬▬▬▬▬▬

Monkey Island (1, 2 or 4)
▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬

The lack of red herrings mean that it's rare to find yourself clicking on everything else to progress, but it also means that there's little challenge as the minimal amount of objects you carry can only ever apply to a minimal amount of other objects.

WHAT POSSIBLE USE COULD THAT HAVE?

Of course, we can't lay all the blame at *Stupid Invaders'* feet – adventure games have been condensing their essence for years – however, it seems to stand out more than usual in here. Even if you do manage to click on something extraneous to the plot, chances are you won't even get a detailed description of what it is, with your character staying silent. As I said, for a game this large, there doesn't seem to be an awful lot of speech. They won't even grace the air with a 'I can't do that' when you attempt something wrong – not that you'll find yourself doing that too often where the puzzles are concerned.

Despite the aforementioned,

> **Playing through the whole game, knowing what to expect and skipping cut-scenes takes only slightly over an hour**

minimalist approach, *Stupid Invaders* starts out quite well, with the expectantly easy initial puzzles setting the scene nicely. It's just that further on they don't seem to get any better. In fact, in some ways, they get worse. One certain scene sees you trapped in a pit with a giant fly. To get out you have to talk to the fly. There's no dialogue, nothing else to click on. Just click on the fly four times and you get taken out. It wouldn't

↑ Now this truly is one stupid little invader.

be so bad if the exact same thing didn't happen throughout; click on the solitary switch in order to open the door to the next scene. Where's the puzzle in that? To add insult to injury, they even see fit to include one of those repeat-the-pattern Simon games along with a (thankfully deceptively small) maze. Still, at least there's a logic to them. Which is more than can be said about the death scenes.

I AM RUBBER, YOU ARE GLUE

If there's one thing we don't want back from old adventures, it's illogical death. Click on one inconspicuous lever and you die, click on another and you don't. A close-quarters explosion doesn't kill you but a gunshot will. And so on. It's all totally unexpected. You just can't tell where it's going to come from and chances are you won't have saved beforehand. Mind you, it's not going to take you too long to get back to where you started – playing through the whole game, knowing what to expect and skipping cut-scenes takes only slightly over an hour – but it has to be said, it's not on.

The lack of decent puzzles and the brevity of *Stupid Invaders* don't do it any favours. Not to put

it completely down: if all you're after is a high quality, funny, interactive cartoon, well, you're perfectly catered for here. Then again, you'd be best checking out the highly underrated *Toonstruck* first – a game of similar elements that does a terrific job on both the twisted humour and puzzle front while displaying slightly more interaction than can be found here (even though it does have a Simon puzzle). Either that, or the obvious gentleman's choice: the new *Monkey Island* episode, which does a hell of a lot more for characterisation and length than *Stupid Invaders* ever will.

To sum up, if you're after a challenging game, you're not going to find it here. Right, I've got about 75 words left, just enough room for some bonus moaning: characters sometimes don't respond to mouse clicks, there are spelling errors in the subtitles and there's one section where you have to wander around similarly empty sections of barren desert, with little clue of which way leads to death, clicking everywhere just to find two necessary objects. And that's… about… it…. Bye! (Slam! Pit-a-pat-pat. Clunk. Click. Vrrm, vrrm. Screech! Vrooom!)

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 **Memory** 32Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D Card **WE SAY:** 400Mb hard-disk space on minimum install

PCZ VERDICT

↑ **UPPERS** Funny cut-scenes • Logical puzzles

↓ **DOWNERS** Too easy • Instant death • Little characterisation • Not that much to do

48 An interactive cartoon that left the game in its other trousers

He's the 'stork' of the town.

Even aliens need to fulfill their sexual desires (bonus game not included).

The skewed angles certainly make the backgrounds look attractive.

A shitload of toilets – literally.

⊕ WALKTHROUGH

SO STUPID

A short guide to the first puzzle in the game, which is about as hard as it ever gets. Anyone who doesn't want to spoil their enjoyment of about ten per cent of the game should look away now

1 Bolok, your nemesis, has got you trapped in the bog. Looks like the windows are your only hope of escape, but how the Dickens are you meant to get up there? If only there was some rope or something lying around.

2 No rope. But there does seem to be some industrial strength toilet paper, this being a toilet and all. And over there is a plunger. It's almost as if the two were made for each other.

3 Attach them together and fire them at the window. Still, even if you had no clue, it wouldn't take you too long, what with the limited resources to hand.

4 And then you're out in the fresh air and into some kind of wacky cartoon Twilight Zone where puzzles seem to get easier instead of harder. Let's hope they put a bit more work into the already proposed *Stupid Invaders 2*.
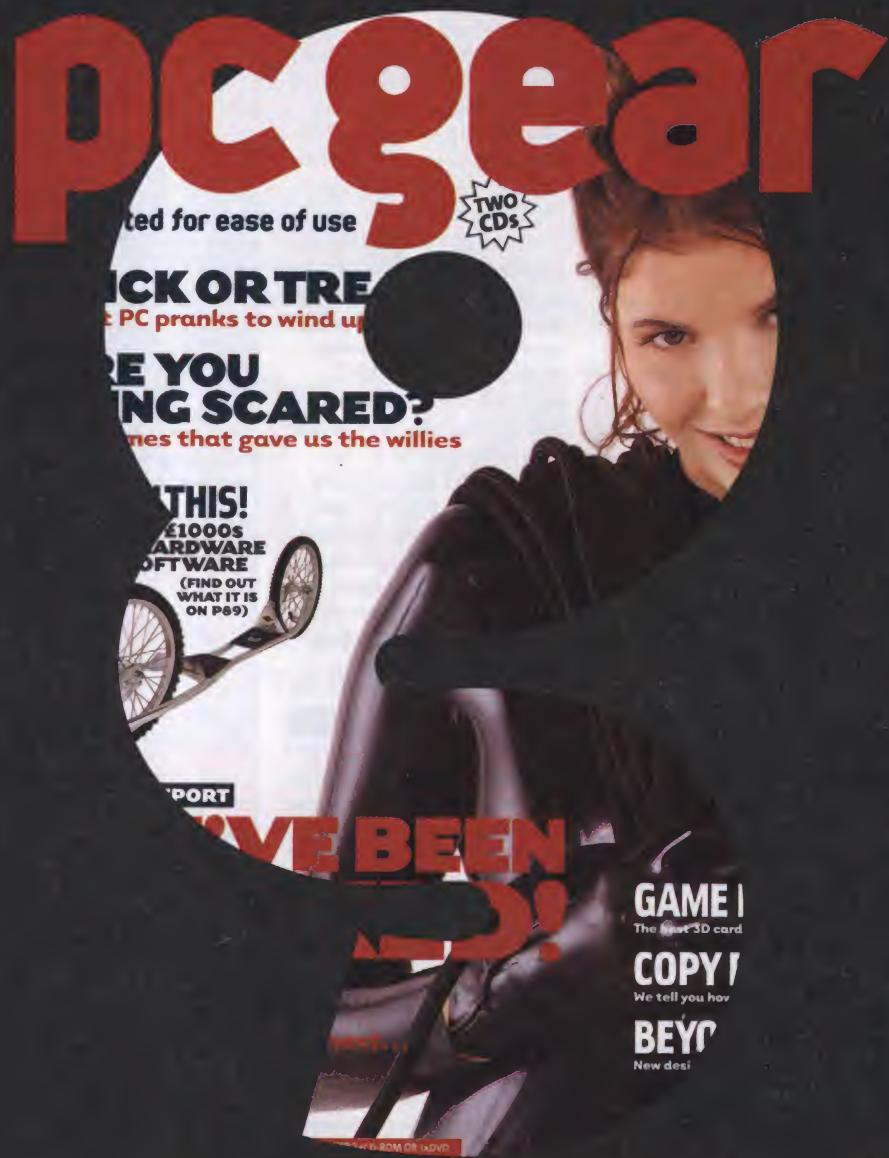
STARSHIP TROOPERS: TERRAN ASCENDANCY

⭐ £29.99 • Hasbro Interactive • Out Now

Keith Pullin is convinced that crap films inevitably spawn epically crap games

One of the worst things about crap films is the way they inevitably give birth to crap games. *Starship Troopers* is one of those occasions. Quite simply, *Starship Troopers* does for real-time strategy games what *Daikatana* did for first-person shooters – need we say more?

Well, we probably could leave it at that, and to be fair, you'd be better off without the gory details, but this is a reviews' magazine and it's our job to constructively criticise mournful interactive entertainment. Therefore that is what we shall do…

DAMN BUGS

The really disheartening thing about *Starship Troopers* is the fact that it begins quite well. The tutorial does a great job of showing you how to control your squad and it's not long before you find yourself leaping off the drop ship with 12 willing troopers under your able command.

It's at this point where everything falls apart. Despite its obvious leanings towards *Ground Control* (no resource management, yet maximum action), *ST* still fails to get the adrenaline pumping. The graphics don't help. No matter what mode or resolution you choose, the landscapes look like cardboard – just like the film. The creature models are also basic and in some cases look almost two or three years old.

What's worse, however, is the weird camera system. For some reason you can never look directly up (which is a pain when there are flying bugs overhead) and you cannot look through your troopers' eyes. Another highly irritating thing about the camera is the way it loses your men. OK, so you can hit the space bar to refocus on your squad, but still – the mere fact that there's a command to actually do that shows that something is very, very wrong.

> ❝We expect more from a RTS game, like having characters that can walk without becoming confused or getting lodged in the scenery❞

And now we come to the AI. We expect certain things from a RTS game here at *PC ZONE*, the main thing being that a character can walk from A to B without becoming lodged in the scenery, confused, or experiencing some debilitating nervous breakdown. Your soldiers in *ST* will do all three of these as often as possible.

Oddly, this is in complete contrast to the bugs themselves who at the first sign of trouble are adept at scampering off and warning their mates. A few seconds later a dozen creatures appear and start circling around you – it's eerie stuff. They even speak to each other in their weird high-pitched clicky language.

SOLDIER ON

It really is a shame that there are so many things wrong with *ST* because some areas are superb. The soldier experience system is brilliant; the more bugs a trooper kills the more his aim, range and other attributes increase. Occasionally, even the battles are enjoyable, especially when you get to fight some of the massive bugs.

Ultimately, though, the poor AI and dodgy camera work are unforgivable. If those two aspects had worked *ST* could have been something special. As it stands, it's barely even average. **PCZ**

PCZVERDICT

🔼 **UPPERS** Excellent soldier experience system • Quality sound • Good enemy AI

🔽 **DOWNERS** Poor camera interface • Characterless graphics • Shocking trooper AI

58 Starship bloopers

Occasionally, the battles are actually enjoyable, particularly when you have to take on some giant bugs.

Soldier and enemy models are abysmal.

This is arsenal heaven: flamethrowers, rocket launchers, chain guns and more with which to cause mayhem.
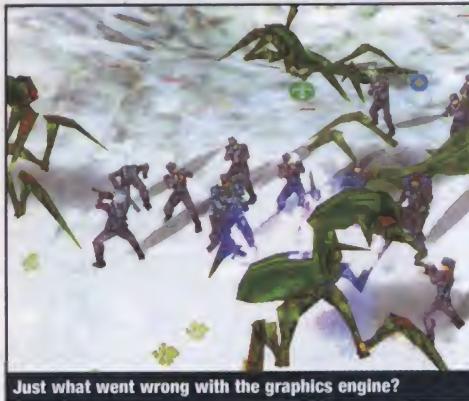
Just what went wrong with the graphics engine?

Flying creatures cause all sorts of problems.

MERCEDES-BENZ TRUCK RACING

⊘ £29.99 • THQ • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P333 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** directX 7.0a compatible AGP 3D graphics card with 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** That should do it

We're often berating racing games for lack of originality, so when something different comes along we're forced to find alternative reasons to criticise it. In its favour, *Mercedes-Benz Truck Racing* isn't another Grand Prix or rally game. Unfortunately, it's about truck racing, horses for courses, clearly. But if you're the kind of person who sports self-administered tattoos, enjoys sleeping in lay-bys with a stash of pornographic literature and once had a CB radio, then this may well be your idea of heaven.

Offensive stereotypes aside, the game does actually revolve around an official sport, which if the press release is to be believed "has taken over from *Formula 1* as the most exciting driver sport around." Of course it has. The tracks are authentic enough, and using a version of the Breakneck engine, they certainly look splendid. But when you've torn around Donington on a Superbike and the Nurburgring in a Grand Prix car, lumbering round in a lorry is a change of pace to say the least. The momentum of these beasts is vast, and overtaking manoeuvres often have to be planned weeks in advance.

Firmly entrenched in the simulation camp, *MB Truck Racing* is by no means a throwaway arcade affair, and hours of practice are required before you can take the stabilisers off. Those prepared to make the commitment may find some perverse pleasure in the game, but they are no friends of ours.

Steve Hill

PCZVERDICT   **58%**

The first corner melee (7mph and under).

A lorry has jack-knifed at Donington, spilling its load.

That's German for Eddie Stobart.

THE TYPING OF THE DEAD

⊘ £24.99 • Empire Interactive • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRED** 8Mb 3D card **WE SAY** The most important thing is a keyboard and a knowledge of touch typing

If only George Romero had thought of this. Imagine if instead of using rifles to blow open the zombies' brains, the characters trapped in the house of *Night Of The Living Dead* had run out into the hellishly cold air armed with a computer keyboard and typed the undead into submission. Such is the power of words.

Originally intended as another sequel to the console *House Of the Dead* to be played on the Dreamcast's keyboard, *The Typing Of The Dead* finds its spiritual home on the PC. It's still very much a game on rails but, instead of playing with a plug-in laser gun, you use the PC's natural weapon: the QWERTY board. Through a series of episodes you rid towns of their zombie infestations by typing the words that appear before them as fast as you can. Small creatures only require one letter, while end-of-level bosses need whole paragraphs to be written. The really great thing about it is that as words get longer and more complex and you find your fingers stumbling all over the keyboard, the game simulates the nightmarish frustration, despair and anxiety you would probably feel if you were being attacked by waves of zombies in the street. Not only do you need to type faster to stay alive, there is the moral imperative of trying to save the people around you. The consequences of bad spelling are dead innocents being ripped to pieces all around you.

The graphics are pretty poor but, if you're anything like us, you'll spend most of your time looking down at the keys rather than at the screen. *TTOTD* is probably the first game where, instead of finding cheats on the Net when you get stuck, you need to hire a secretary and, as a typing teaching tool it beats *Mavis Beacon* to a bloody pulp. After playing, I wrote this review in just under two minutes. Thank God for spellcheckers, though.

Mark Hill

PCZVERDICT   **60%**
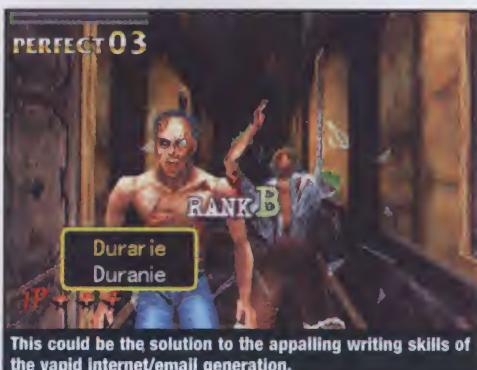
This could be the solution to the appalling writing skills of the vapid internet/email generation.

"Typing on the keyboard is very much like making love to a beautiful woman." Well no, actually, it isn't.

In this case, the keyboard is mightier than the sword.

THE GRINCH

⊛ £29.99 • Konami • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor 266 MHz **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Yup, that works pretty well

"It isn't easy being green," sang Kermit the Frog, and how right he was. The Grinch may have come from the wrong side of the swamp, but things certainly don't run smoothly when you've got kids to scare, snowmen to smash and a Whoville Christmas to ruin.

You play the green one on his quest through a Dr Seuss-inspired world to disrupt the festive celebrations of the far too cute Whoville and collect the missing blueprints for the Grinch gadgets. Unfortunately, you can't do a lot of serious maiming with weapons like the Rotten Egg Launcher and Slime Shooter. Well, what did you expect? Along the way you have to indulge in all kinds of child-friendly naughtiness, such as squashing presents, sabotaging posters and, heavens no, shuffling the mail.

Movie tie-in games have a reputation for being fairly half-hearted at best and cat litter at worst. Lumped in with the whole merchandising shebang alongside talking dolls and plastic lunchboxes, those poor pixels never really stand much of a chance. But the Grinch is worth a quick second look simply because once in a while, when everything stops rhyming, it's quite good fun.

The game doesn't break any new ground, either visually or in terms of gameplay. It runs relatively smoothly, the puzzles are fairly tricky and the graphics and sound are certainly passable. Moreover, it's almost refreshing not to have to worry about being blown to pieces and know that the most dangerous thing around the next corner is likely to be an over-enthusiastic child.

If you're prepared to make some serious concessions to your inner child, then you and the Grinch might form a beautiful friendship. If, however, you're more of a blood-and-gore type of a gamer, you might find yourself thinking 'Yes, this is all very pretty, but where's the light anti-tank gun?'

Rhianna Pratchett

PCZVERDICT 65%

No I don't want to see your Pokemon collection.

Grinch regrets the I *can* believe it's not butter jest.

Oh, go on, hug me I dare you to...

The extra characters make the game.

He's still mugging innocent field mice.

BUGS BUNNY & TAZ: TIME BUSTERS

⊛ £19.99 • Infogrames • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** P266, 8Mb RAM 3D card recommended and that should do the trick

As much as we're loathed to admit it, we are not adverse to the odd platform game, and although this isn't particularly ground-breaking, it's perfect hangover material, thanks to the fact it's easy on the eye, aimed at five-year-olds and occasionally funny. *Bugs Bunny*, of course, starred in his own platformer a couple of months back and, apart from the two-player mode and a new bunch of levels, this isn't all that different. Again, Bugs, this time aided by the unsubtle Tasmanian Devil, must jump, climb, swim, run and fight his way through 30 levels, split across four time zones collecting gems and gears so Granny can get her time machine back in working order. Because this is aimed at kids, you're spoon fed all the way through, but the saving grace are the cameos, everyone from Daffy and Tweety to Yosemite Sam and Elmer Fudd. The voices are pretty darn good, but it's a shame the trademark Loony Tunes violence is toned down in these times of political correctness.

Richie Shoemaker

PCZVERDICT 67%

STARLINES INC

⊛ £19.99 • RealGames • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor Pentium **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** P166 for smooth play

Recently we've been inundated with games like *Starlines Inc*, and quite frankly we're baffled as to why so many have crawled out of the woodwork in such a small space of time. Of course there's a market for business strategy games (somewhere), and at least this one tries to approach the subject from a slightly novel angle. Yes you've guessed it, *Starlines Inc* is a business management game set in space.

All the usual blurb is there, from setting up a fleet of ships which transport goods from one stupidly named solar system to the next, to recruiting staff, who range from the criminally incompetent to the sickeningly efficient. Your ships can degenerate, and it's a nice touch that some star systems have varying laws as to what condition ships must be in, in order for them to enter that part of space.

Graphically, it's amateurish, but as ever there's the usual collection of insomnia-curing stat screens to keep you occupied. However, *Starlines Inc* offers nothing new whatsoever and fails to stand out from the crowd, unless of course you consider its sci-fi setting as being a major selling point.

Martin Korda

PCZVERDICT 47%

Transport cargo and passengers to planets with stupid names like Starlines Inc.
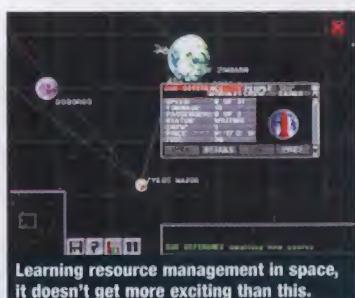
Learning resource management in space, it doesn't get more exciting than this.

TIMELINE

⊗ £29.99 • Eidos Interactive • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P266 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRED** 8Mb 3D card **WE SAY** About right – it should do just fine

After writing such huge blockbusters as *Jurassic Park* and also scripting and directing several big '70s films, such as *Coma* and *Westworld*, it was only a matter of time before Michael Crichton made an appearance on the PC. The fact that *Timeline*, his latest novel, wasn't immediately snapped up by Hollywood is proof enough that the story is pretty shoddy. But, as a computer game, it's an oddly endearing and simplistic first-person adventure that should appeal to adults who normally only ever play golf sims – attracted by Crichton's name; and children who have yet to master *Quake III* – attracted by the juvenile story. You're a young archaeologist excavating an historic region of France whose professor disappears leaving only a videotape behind. In it he explains that he's just buggered off to the 14th century with a newly created time machine (imagine Steven Spielberg turning that into a movie).

As you follow him into feudal France, you have to complete a succession of simple puzzles and sub-games as you search for him and make sure no one discovers your identity. If it all sounds like a Disney TV series, it's because that's what it plays like. In fact, you're not even allowed to kill anyone because this would have catastrophic consequences to your timeline. The surprising thing is that, taken on its own simplistic terms, it's not a bad lunchtime romp. The sub-games include sliding down an icy slope, participating in a jousting tournament, winning an archery contest and riding wildly through a village under siege. On their own, these games are pretty pathetic but, combined with some undemanding *Thief*-style sneaking around, it makes for some pleasant entertainment.

Mark Hill

PCZVERDICT 60%

Sneak around the guards or duel with them, just don't kill.
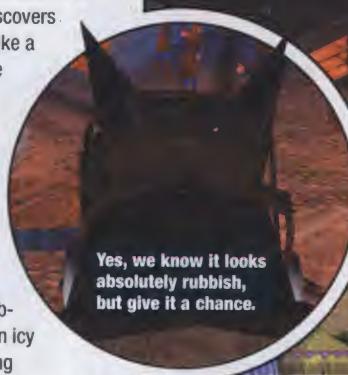
Yes, we know it looks absolutely rubbish, but give it a chance.

Any game with a jousting tournament is good enough for us.

DONALD DUCK GOIN' QUACKERS

⊗ £30 • Disney • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** This should do fine

As I was playing through this game, deep in concentration and doing my best to ignore the cries of 'Go! Go! Go!' emanating from the rest of the PCs in the *ZONE* office, someone stood behind me and muttered: "Do you do anything in this game apart from bouncing on things?"

After a moment's thought, it became obvious that this was pretty much the sum of Disney's latest formulaic mock 3D-platform game. Jumping, punching and collecting stars are all secondary to the occupation that takes up about 90 per cent of your time in this harmless and mildly amusing kid 'em up. If you're looking for a better example of the genre, we'd suggest taking a look at Cryo's *Gift*, which combines the familiar with a couple of original touches, but as platformers go, this certainly isn't a disgrace.

Dave Woods

PCZVERDICT 49%

Disney's latest effort seems to be taking its lead from the Countryside Alliance.
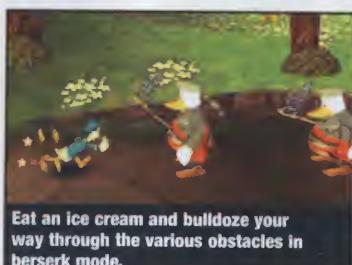
Eat an ice cream and bulldoze your way through the various obstacles in berserk mode.

No way, BA!

This isn't shitty enough to be my office.

AIRLINE TYCOON

⊗ £19.99 • Monte Christo • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P90 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** P133

Airline Tycoon is a management game – yes another one – in which, surprise surprise, you have to manage an airline and beat off all of your rivals by fair means or foul.

As per usual, you get to control every aspect of your business. But just to add a twist to a genre which prides itself on static screens and bar graphs (and I think you'll agree that this is verging on genius), you actually get to walk around from one place to the next, in order to broker deals with people. Unfortunately, the characters that you deal with look like they've been involved in some genetic experiments from an early age and the music will have you ripping the sound card out of your machine just to preserve your sanity.

Otherwise, it's business as usual. That means setting prices, buying and improving your planes, hiring and firing staff ad infinitum. However, just like *Starlines Inc* (see over the page), there's simply nothing here that distinguishes it from all the other trading/management games. Try *CityTrader* instead.

Martin Korda

PCZVERDICT 40%

TV STAR

⭐ £19.99 • Monte Cristo • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Try a PII 300

Being a TV star isn't all posing in sequinned tissues and stuffing cocaine into every available orifice (or just your own) it actually takes hard graft to get there and even harder graft to keep yourself there.

In *TV Star* you have to make your way from a humble studio cleaner to a media starlet by uncovering news stories, breaking hearts, answering random trivia games and generally doing more butt kissing than Ruby Wax.

Supergrass gets everywhere.

This allows you to build up your rich, clever and bonny points (the latter obviously meaning your ability to grow long curly ginger hair and talk in an annoyingly high-pitched voice) and advance through the levels.

It's a novel idea but, unfortunately, there's little playability or substance to the game. In short, it's a highly dumb, but mildly amusing game that pokes fun at media darlings everywhere – and, without exception, that's always good for a laugh.

Rhianna Pratchett

PCZ VERDICT   **48%**

Go on, be a slobbering, sycophantic bitch!

Your missions are sent via email through an overused *Matrix*-style green-tint lens.

You fly around dreary urban landscapes in your anti-gravity car. Very *Blade Runner*.

CRIME CITIES

⭐ £29.99 • Eon Digital • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 **Memory** 32RAM, 3D Card **WE SAY** P400, 64Mb RAM, 8Mb RAM 3D Card essential

Back in 1995, the first of the 3D cards for the PC had appeared (remember the original Voodoo?) and PlayStation had just been launched. And one of the first ever games for the PS was *G-Police* from Psygnosis. The game was a fairly lack-lustre affair, but the graphics were gob smacking at the time.

Six years on and things have changed. Everything that is, except for a handful of programmers at Techland, the developers of *Crime Cities*, who have created what amounts to a doppelganger of *G-Police*.

Flying about in your anti-gravity car around a *Blade Runner* environment, you get missions via email in a *Matrix*-style green-tint-lens shot that has been so overused in both games and Hollywood that it's a sign of serious imagination drought.

And sadly that's what this game is all about, zero imagination. Uninspiring story line, uninspiring graphics and uninspiring gameplay gives you an incredibly dull game, and one which you're not likely to return to any time soon. Even picking fleas off your pet hamster would be more exciting.

Daniel Emery

PCZ VERDICT   **40%**

MISSION: HUMANITY

⭐ £29.99 • Eon digital • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P100 **Memory** 24Mb RAM **WE SAY** P200, 32Mb RAM

Dear Santa,

I was a good boy all year. I did my homework for skool, I was nice to my sister, and I really wanted a RTS for Christmas. So when I opened my present, I was very happy. *Mission: Humanity* looked like a super RTS, with all the right ingredients: resource management, nasty aliens and lots of missions.

You utter bastard. What you gave me was at best a third-rate attempt. I needed a microscope to see the units, the combat (such as it was) consisted of lots of pinging noises and the AI seems to have been programmed by a psychotic maniac with memory loss. I keep sending my troops to shoot stuff and they end up blasting at everything in sight.

You and the tooth fairy are in cahoots. I've wasted hours trying to see if it got better, it didn't. The resource management was a mess. I filled my barracks with troops, and they didn't want to leave the building. Why not? And why is everything the same shade of brown?

Couldn't you have got me something useful? *Red Alert 2* costs the same, and it's tops. I don't believe anyone should ever have to suffer this game. If you give me something this bad next year, I'm going to slip on a dress and become a Hare Krishna. At least they want you to be happy.

Daniel Emery

PCZ VERDICT   **15%**

RTS games don't get much worse than this.

It takes more than loads of missions to make a great game.

LINKS 2001

JACK NICKLAUS 6: GOLDEN BEAR CHALLENGE

PCZSUPERTEST
GOLF GAMES

⊙ Keith (Quick nine) Pullin reviewed *Tiger Woods 2000* (*PCZ* #90, 77%), *PGA Golf 2000* (*PCZ* #92, 84%) and *Links 2001* (*PCZ* #98, 75%) ⊙ Paul (Hustler) Presley is obsessed with retro golf games. ⊙ Dave (Little chips are my speciality) Woods is a closet golf fan and reviewed the abysmal *Ultimate Golf* (*PCZ* #92, 27%). ⊙ Martin (Where's the hole?) Korda reviewed the original *PGA Championship Golf* (*PCZ* #80, 82%) ⊙ Mark (Sergio Garcia) Hill reviewed *Jack Nicklaus 6* (*PCZ* #78, 84%).

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2000

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000

How do you upset members of an exclusive London golf club? Easy. Dress up like simpletons and run around the 18th green trampling the lush grass into mud. It worked for us anyway...

★ ON THE TEE Keith Pullin

F or the average person, watching a small white pixel move from one green and pleasant pasture to another is hardly the pinnacle of excitement. Nevertheless, PC golf games continue to sell by the bucket load. The Links series has been around for almost a decade, and during that time has even attempted a brief flirtation with the more surreal side of golf in *Links Extreme*. Unsurprisingly, few held dear the spectacle of zombies wandering around fairways and exploding balls. That's not what golf is about.

Nor is it about *Beavis & Butt-Head's Bunghole In One*.
A good golf game needs to be accurate. It also need be fun in order to hold the player's attention. Unfortunately, the fact that real golf is often frustrating, confusing and downright soul-destroying means a successful combination of realism and fun is about as rare as Nick Faldo's good moods. Dozens of developers have tried and there are numerous candidates we could have called upon to stand

trial but, in the end, we chose the four that we think are currently leading the world rankings. It's these big four we pondered as we pranced around the 18th green at Finchley Golf Club, London. And when we could cope with the Plus Fours and tweed jackets no more, we retired to the 19th hole to discuss our thoughts in depth...

Korda's in trouble again.

That's a woman?

LINKS 2001

Dave: When I went to see the preview at Microsoft, all they were talking about was how the game had gone up from so many thousand polygons to loads more polygons. Then they showed the new version compared to the old version, and the only thing they pointed out was the detail in the plantation.

Mark: They're trying to market it towards people who have gone on those courses. They want to tell them that every stone, every leaf is exactly the same. I think most golf games try and sell themselves like that.

Dave: This guy was even saying that they've programmed in so much detail beyond the golf course that you can hit the ball into someone's back yard.

Prezzer: Wow. Can you have a fight with the owner if you break a window?

Dave: That would be good.

Keith: Something Links has that no other golf game has, as far as I know, is the coloured contours on the green to help you putt. Also, the guiding arrow let's you know which way the green is sloping.

Prezzer: Every golf game has some indication as to which way the green is sloping.

Keith: But this makes it clear.

Prezzer: Well, to bring it up for the first time, but probably not the last time today, the best for that was *David Leadbetter's Golf*.

Dave: Also known as Microprose Golf, which was the best golf game ever.

Prezzer: I've never liked *Links*.

Keith: Why? It's the most successful golf simulation of all time.

Prezzer: Beer's a successful drink, but it doesn't mean it's any good for you. It's ridiculous.

Dave: On this version the graphics look weird; the characters are realistic and the courses are too, but put together they just look really out of place.

Martin: Everything about it feels wrong. From the look of the characters on the course to actually hitting the ball and the way it flies. There's something about the physics; it screams at you that something is wrong.

Dave: It's like you're cutting out a character from a photograph and putting it in another photograph with completely different lighting. It just looks weird.

Keith: But it's got loads of options. You can pretty much do anything you want on it.

Martin: It's a hardcore golfers golf simulation isn't it?

Keith: So is it accessible for people who want to have a quick, fun round then?

Martin: It is accessible to them, but people who want a quick round generally want nice graphical touches and all the other bits and pieces that mean pleasant gaming. It hasn't got course flybys; it hasn't got much crowd noise or commentary, and it hasn't got the same kind of television presentation that the others have.

Dave: It's got the hotel Keith's going to stay in in Whistler. That's accurate and polished presentation.

Keith: Yeah, that's brilliant. I see what Whistler looks like before I get there.

Dave: The PowerStroke is really weird though.

Mark: It's not really weird, it's really shit.

Dave: No, once you put some time into it and get used to it, it's actually quite good.

Prezzer: It's just a carbon copy of what everyone else is doing.

Keith: Not really. They've broken the swing down into different elements so you can visibly see how much hook or slice or whatever you've put on the ball.

Prezzer: It's because they want to look different.

Dave: It's not the same as everyone else because you pull the club back on the slider and you've got movement both up and down so you can actually hit above or below the ball.

Martin: That's what *PGA 2000* does.

Prezzer: And thingemebob does that too. What's that old one? *Golf Champion* or *Golf Pro* or something?

Mark: *The Golf Pro*. That was really rubbish.

Dave: I really liked it.

Prezzer: The whole idea of this mouse thing has been useless since day one.

Dave: In PGA it's fantastic – it works really well. So you're a retro-golf tri-clicker then Prezzer?

Prezzer: Yeah.

Mark: That's because you haven't learnt how to use a mouse properly.

Prezzer: You don't need any more than three clicks.

Dave: It'll be about seven clicks when *Links 2003* comes along.

Mark: I never used to like the mouse swing system until I got used to the *PGA* one and I've never looked back since.

Keith: The trouble with the PowerStroke in *Links 2001* is that it's quite complicated to use. The one in *PGA* is straightforward and simple and that's what makes the game great fun.

Martin: It's true. In Links you even have to click when you swing the mouse to hit the ball. If it wasn't for that it would be quite a good system.

Dave: It's not in real-time either and that detracts from the realism. You do your swing, wait for half a second and then it takes the shot.

Prezzer: Another thing that's terrible is the chipping. You just cannot judge the distance and there's no indication as to what is half power on the swing.

Keith: The digitised courses don't help when it comes to judging distances – there's no depth to them.

Prezzer: The digitised backgrounds used to be a big thing. I think everyone else has managed to move on, whereas *Links* hasn't. It needs to redesign itself.

> **❝ I think everyone else has managed to move on, whereas *Links* hasn't. It needs to redesign itself ❞**
> **PREZZER THINKS A FACELIFT IS NEEDED FOR LINKS 2001**

Prezzer: It actually had full 3D greens with contours and everything. It was the first golf game to use polygons. You could actually see exactly where all the bumps were and how wet, or how hard, the ground was. By the way – is there a career mode on *Links*?

Everyone: (Silence)

Keith: You can play as a woman if you like – Annika Sorenstam no less, the world's greatest female golfer.

Mark: Is that a real person?

Dave: Overall I think there are good bits to *Links*. If you are a hardcore golfer and you really want something to get your teeth into, this is the one to go for.

LINKS 2001

The Links golfing dynasty has been around in one form or another since 1992. The latest version does its best to offer fans of the series something new to work with, and is now more packed than ever with options and features that most people wouldn't even understand – or want to.

SCORE	75%
DEVELOPER	Access Software
PUBLISHER	Microsoft
REVIEWED	PCZ #98

This is why people shout 'fore!'

Don't do it, it'll end in tears.

JACK NICKLAUS 6: GOLDEN BEAR CHALLENGE

Dave: Is there any truth in the rumour that the next version is going to be called Jack Nicklaus Golden Showers?

Everyone: (*Laughs*)

Prezzer: If there is another one, it'll probably be a tribute because he's going to die soon surely? He's about 200.

Dave: He's quite old.

Martin: He's still alive?

Keith: I've got one of his *How To Learn Golf* videos.

Everyone: (*Silence*)

Mark: That's a conversion stopper.

Everyone: (*More silence*)

Keith: Anyway, so this is available at £9.99 now. Is that a bargain?

Martin: I absolutely cannot stand the crappy swing system. You have to move the mouse really

> **"I absolutely cannot stand the crappy swing system. You have to move the mouse really slowly, which is completely unrealistic and boring"**
>
> MARTIN SWINGS INTO ACTION ON JACK NICKLAUS 6

slowly, which is completely unrealistic and boring. Or you have to move it really quickly, but then you don't hit the ball. So, you use the two click or tri-click method instead, but because they're so archaic you can't be bothered.

Prezzer: I beg your pardon? The tri-click system archaic?

Martin: It just boils down to reactions.

Mark: I disagree completely. I think the three-click system on this is one of the best. In Links the power bar goes up, and then, all of a sudden, it's down. With this, it's the right pace.

Prezzer: Let's go back to *David Leadbetter's*. The tri-click system there worked because it did all that correcting of the swing and the stance by moving the click target area on the power bar. Sometimes it would go up, sometimes down, all depending on your lie, or your club or whatever. It took into account everything to do with your ball lie. It was perfect and that's how a good tri-click system should work.

Martin: So does that come down to skill or reaction?

Prezzer: Skill, or a combination of the two.

Mark: What's skill and what's reaction? When you're playing *Quake* that's reaction, but it's skill as well.

Prezzer: There is a very simple point here; this isn't real, this is computer golf.

Keith: The kind of people who play golf games are usually into golf for real, so they'll want their game to be as close as possible to the real thing. Martin's completely right when he says the tri-click on this is crap. Never in a million years could this load of old clicks be construed as simulating a golf swing.

Martin: You want it realistic.

Prezzer: Actually having said all this, the arcade version used a trackball. You used to pull the trackball right back then – waaaang!

Dave: You could waaaang it off to the left, and waaaang it off to the right… I used to love trackball games…

Martin: There are some really cool things in *Jack 6* though. You've got the flyovers and Jack telling you about the courses…

Dave: Yup. The flyovers are truly superb.

Martin: And the camera angles during the game are good too. Still, in saying that, it's showing its age now.

Dave: It's got excellent music.

Prezzer: Ha!

Mark: The menu music is the best.

Prezzer: Are you serious? It's absolutely terrible.

Dave: Also, one of the quotes, from Jack Nicklaus I presume, and if anyone knows what this means, do write in and tell us please, says: 'So deep in the woods, Marlon Perkins wouldn't go in there.' So who's Marlon Perkins?

Mark: That could be a mini-competition.

Dave: I do like the way the crowds whoop and holler. It's also very easy to navigate through the menus. There's a good interface there.

Mark: It's a very simple arcady game.

Dave: The partial swing meter is a very good feature too.

Mark: What are you talking about?

Prezzer: It's not a full swing meter, but it's partial.

Keith: It's good for doing chips just off the green.

Prezzer: I haven't come across a golf game yet that does chipping really well.

Dave: Putting is dreadful. The camera angle is from the shoe; like looking through their legs.

Mark: You can change it, but it's still pretty poor.

Keith: It also only does the contours for the area immediately around you, not the whole green.

Mark: Sure, it's got problems, but it's still a fantastic budget buy.

Keith: True; not bad for a tenner. You get your money's worth. ➡

JACK NICKLAUS 6: GOLDEN BEAR CHALLENGE

This is another of those series that's been around for a while. *Jack Nicklaus 6* is a bit older than the other three games in this Supertest, but, nevertheless, it still manages to convey a great sense of fun which is nicely combined with some slick presentation.

SCORE	84%
DEVELOPER	Hypno Entertainment
PUBLISHER	Activision
REVIEWED	PCZ #78

"Ahhhh choooo!"
"Sorry Tiger."

Birdie

At last – a putt goes down.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2000

Mark: This is the worst game here. It smacks of being an arcade game with shit graphics. The interface is poor, the physics are haphazard, and the swing system is dire.
Keith: What about the camera view – the way it follows the ball?
Mark: That's its one redeeming feature; the tracking camera for the ball is fantastic.

Prezzer: What? Electronic Arts in good presentation shocker?
Dave: Well no, this is it. The presentation itself is abysmal, but that one camera mode is spot on.
Mark: I assume other games can't do it either because of restrictions with their engines, or they just haven't thought of it yet.
Prezzer: Is it called *Tiger Woods Golf* to appeal to Nike wearing Tiger Woods fans?
Mark: It's also got Michael Jordan and other big names.
Prezzer: Does it add to it though? Does it really feel like you're playing against Tiger Woods?
Dave: No. But it's the only game where you can sit there and shout: "I am Tiger Woods!"
Keith: I created a tournament and played against Tiger Woods and the AI is spot on. He's almost too good. Every pitch into the green lands within four feet of the pin and every drive flies down the centre of the fairway.

Mark: I don't understand what you're saying.
Keith: Sorry, am I speaking in jargon?
Mark: You're speaking in golf.
Prezzer: Surely his short game would be terrible if it was realistic?
Keith: Well I don't know whether his short game is terrible…
Prezzer: It used to be. He's probably come on a bit now.
Keith: The point is, when you're playing the game and Tiger chips, you never think for a moment that he's going to mess up. It's like playing against a computer that will never, ever go wrong. He's relentless – the golfing Terminator.
Mark: Maybe that's his secret. He is an android.
Martin: I've noticed that the control system doesn't have any resemblance to what you actually do. So you hit the ball and it doesn't do what you tell it to do.
Mark: (*Laughs*) You can't tell a ball to go somewhere.
Martin: No, listen. You aim your shot, decide how hard you're going to hit it, and then it just seems to skew off in the wrong direction. You're like: "Where the hell is my ball going?"
Keith: That's golf for you.
Dave: The tri-click is very unforgiving. If you go to the top of the power bar, you're much more likely to miss the snap and you'll skew the shot wildly or even scuff it. The best way is to

play safe by clicking at 11 o'clock rather than 12 o'clock.
Mark: (Giggles, looking mystified)
Prezzer: If you're playing against a human opponent, can one of you have the ProSwing and the other have the normal tri-click?
Mark: Yes.
Keith: All golf games let you do that though.
Dave: There's really nothing good about this apart from the shot camera. Of all the games here this is the one I don't like at all. It's really poor for EA considering the advancements they've made in other sports games. 2001 is coming out in the next few weeks now, so we'll give it another thorough going-over then.
Mark: It seems like they've just concentrated on that camera and thought that you'd be so impressed you wouldn't care where the ball landed. Which is true to a certain extent. But when you do

eventually want to play the game, there isn't actually one there to play.
Martin: I think the graphics are almost worse than *Jack 6*.
Dave: The courses look OK, but the characters are absolutely abysmal.
Mark: They're very badly digitised.
Dave: You can see where they've been cut out.

Keith: There are quite a few courses to choose from.
Dave: There are eight, which is pretty good. And there's the course architect.
Mark: Some others like *PGA 2000* have more.
Prezzer: There are billions of the damn things available for Links.
Keith: I tell you another annoying thing about *Tiger Woods*; the putting is impossible.
Dave: (To Keith) You reviewed it didn't you and you gave it what? 79 per cent?
Keith: 77 per cent.
Dave: Would you stand by that score now?
Keith: When I scored that we were being less critical with our reviews.
Dave: I think we'd already introduced our new scoring system when you reviewed that.
Keith: No way!
Dave: Yup. We introduced it one year ago, then six months later, we told you.
Everyone: (*Laughs*)

> **"Of all the games here this is the one I really don't like at all. It's really poor for EA considering the advancements they've made in other sports games"**
>
> DISAPPOINTED DAVE LAYS INTO TEDIOUS TIGER WOODS

Keith: I did have good fun at the time. I actually think that a lot of that fun stemmed from the fact that I was playing with Tiger Woods.
Everyone: (*Sniggers*)
Keith: It has aged though; it's starting to look a bit shabby. That score wouldn't stand now. Happy?

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2000

With the big name license and the marketing machine that is EA Sports, *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2000* is ever popular. Unlike the other games here, it has a distinctive arcade feel to it, and thus its appeal lies mostly in the way that you can play against Tiger – or even as him.

	77%
SCORE	
DEVELOPER	EA Sports
PUBLISHER	Electronic Arts
REVIEWED	PCZ #90

player **Steve Poole**
hole **1** par **4** **E**
stroke **4th**

The crowd seems to be looking at someone else.

player settings
name: Keffy Spiel
options
player editor
player editor
PGA 2000 boasts a fantastic wardrobe...

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000

Dave: I played the last version of this with my brother over the Internet on Sunday night instead of watching *Heartbeat*, and it was fantastic.
Prezzer: You had a choice of playing a golf game across the Internet or watching *Heartbeat*? Why?
Dave: ...

> **When you first start using TrueSwing you fall over quite a lot. It's funny, but it's a bit stupid. No matter how bad you are at real golf you wouldn't fall over.**
>
> **MARK AND HIS EARLY SWINGING DAYS IN PGA 2000**

Everyone: (*Laughs*)
Prezzer: I suddenly feel so very sorry for you.
Mark (To Dave): Wasn't that the time you broke both your legs and couldn't leave the house?
Dave: Unfortunately not. So, anyway we played it over the Internet and it was fantastic. It's really easy to use. Admittedly *PGA 2000* isn't a huge improvement, but it's still fantastic.
Keith: We never mentioned online options in the other games, but we don't need to because they're shit compared to *PGA 2000*.
Prezzer: *Links* is OK.
Keith: Hmmm, it's not bad, but it's got nowhere near the list of options or variety of games and tournaments on offer in *PGA 2000*. There are ladders all over the place, top prize competitions and people even swap courses that they create themselves with

the architect. The whole online community is unbelievable.
Martin: I love the Readyplay mode where you don't have to wait for your opponent before hitting the ball. You just play at the same time.
Keith: It's a bit rude – but it's fast.
Dave: If someone's ball flew past my head just as I was lining up one of my chips, I'd be tempted to use my golf club in an illegal way.
Martin: The best bit about the game is the TrueSwing system.
Dave: Nah. The best thing about the game is the clothes you choose to wear.
Mark: They're pimp clothes.
Everyone: (Laughs. Discussion about pimps playing golf and pimp golf buggies ensues.)
Dave: So, the TrueSwing is the second best thing about it then.
Martin: Sorry, I do apologise.
Mark: Nevertheless it is a very good thing.
Martin: There's nothing better than holing your first putt using the TrueSwing.
Dave: It's such a natural down and up motion. It just feels right. And it's in real-time as well.

Mark: When you first start using TrueSwing you fall over quite a lot. It's funny, but it's a bit stupid. No matter how bad you are at real golf you wouldn't fall over and start rolling away.
Dave: You don't fall over, he lies down if you're taking too long over your shot. It's still stupid though. Plus he always chose to lie down just as I was about to take my shot. The gimp.
Keith: It still has to be the easiest swing to master.
Martin: And there's that cheat where you use the CD box...
Keith: Eh?
Martin: You know! Where you run the mouse along the edge of it...
Dave: This is true actually. If anyone does play Keith over the Internet, I have to warn you that he uses the CD case to do very straight drives.
Keith: I bet 99 per cent of the online population do the same.
Dave: But how would you ever mess up a shot? You wouldn't would you?
Keith: Yes you would. When the CD case slips.
Everyone: (*Laughs*)
Prezzer: I've got a real violent hatred for *PGA Golf*.
Mark: That's an irrational hatred, so shut up.
Martin: The physics are the best; the ricochets are spot on.
Dave: Apart from when you hit a bush and the ball literally pings off rather than going through it.
Keith: It will go through, but it will slow down or go off at a slight angle when it comes out the other side. It will never bounce erratically – apart from on concrete.

Martin: Heckling is another great thing.
Prezzer: That's excellent.
Dave: It's unfair. When we played, I was two shots up with two to go, and then Mark starts heckling. I rushed and it all went to pot.
Mark: Well, you were taking bloody ages! I'd taken a phone call and gone to make a coffee and you were still there...
Dave: While we're on annoying points, I have to mention the commentary. It tells you where the ball ends up before it even lands.
Mark: There must be a way to turn that off though. It's not a major gripe is it?
Keith: There are settings. I think they go along the lines of rare, frequent or no comments.
Prezzer: You need Peter Aliss doing the commentary; talking about the birds fluttering in the trees and stuff like that...
Mark: The putting could be improved. Sometimes you can't see the hole because your golfer's head gets in the way.
Dave: True.
Mark: Also, I think the crowd completely clash with the rest of the graphics.
Martin: Their positioning is terrible. Sometimes an old

woman stands right in front of you while you're taking a shot.
Dave: That happens a lot, but I do find it quite funny. They're all looking off in various different directions too.
Keith: The sound effects for the crowd are good though. There are loads of different reactions depending on whether you're driving, chipping, putting...
Mark: It's just such a well-designed game.
Dave: I don't think I'll ever get bored of it. Well, not until *PGA 2001* comes along. ➔

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000

The packed online clubhouse is testament to the number of followers that this game attracts. These people aren't deluded either; PGA 2000 currently the most physically accurate and the most frighteningly enjoyable golf game on the market. It could be said that it's a stroke of genius...

SCORE	
	84%
DEVELOPER	Sierra Sports
PUBLISHER	Sierra Online/Havas Interactive
REVIEWED	PCZ #92

KEEPING IT REAL

So, do any of these games actually feel like playing real golf? Surely one of them must do... Anyone?

Keith: *PGA 2000* does.
Dave: You reckon it's like playing real golf?
Keith: It's pretty damn close. I played *PGA 2000* all day once during the summer and then popped out for a real game in the evening and played the best golf of my life. I think one of the reasons for that... Nah, that's all balls actually!
Everyone: (*Riotous laughter*)
Dave: Go on.
Keith: OK. One of the things *PGA 2000* did was teach me how to do small chips. I spent all day doing

these delicate little movements with the mouse over and over again. When I transferred that into my pitching wedge on a real course, it worked just as well.
Dave: Just delicate movements with the club?
Keith: Yeah.
Prezzer: Nah, you're talking rubbish. The only golf game that I would class as being realistic is...
Dave: *David Letterman's Golf?*
Mark: (*Laughs insanely*)
Prezzer: (*eyeing Dave suspiciously*) With *David*

Leadbetter's Golf you could build up a character and his history. It saved every single shot you played and you could analyse those shots later. There was a full working handicap system – it had everything.
Dave: Every single shot saved?
Prezzer: Every single shot saved on record.
Dave: And you said I was sad for staying in on Sunday evenings.
Prezzer: But with this you were actually learning while you were playing the game.
Keith: But it's a bloody ten-year-

old Amiga game! How can it be realistic in the sense that we're talking about here?
Prezzer: OK, so the graphics sometimes made you fell as though you were on acid, but it still had that feel.
Keith: I doubt it, especially if you were using the tri-click. You need to get with the times.

Prezzer: I'm very happy where I am thank you.

There you have it then. 'Expert' proof that *PGA 2000* and maybe even *David Leadbetter's Golf* are almost as good as the real thing. Honestly, it's a good job we don't have box-outs like this in FPS Supertests.

> **"I played *PGA 2000* all day once during the summer and then popped out for a real game in the evening. I played the best golf of my life"**
> KEITH CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF PGA 2000

Keith Pullin

Tiger Kite VII.

0(4) Driver 354 yds
Prezzer's favourite game ever.

A good computer game ruined or a stroll in the fresh air?

DRIVING INTO THE FUTURE

Is golf the new rock 'n' roll? We take a peek into the future

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001 and *Microsoft Golf 2001* should be hitting shop shelves pretty soon. They may even be on sale by the time you read this. Sadly, at the moment, there appears to be nothing in either of these that will surpass what's already on offer here.

The big question is: where do golf games go next? It would be nice to think that one day we'll be treated to a proper 3D experience in which you can literally wander around a golf course at your leisure. Hell, why not use an FPS shooter engine such as *Quake III?* Imagine

that. You could even walk off the green and into the bar at the end of the round. Admittedly *Ultimate Golf* from Ubi Soft did make a kind of half-arsed attempt to go down this 3D route but, as Dave will confirm, there is rather a long way to go yet.

Until there is a major breakthrough along these lines, it looks as though we'll have to keep on enduring more of these endless yearly updates. And if that's the case, then we suggest that you keep your eye on *PGA Championship Golf 2001*.

You'll soon be able to buy the latest Microsoft release for £20.

STUCK IN THE ROUGH

The PC is the undisputed home of the golf game and as such there are literally dozens of titles knocking around...

IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR

The *Links* series has been a mainstay of PC computing for years. Aside from *Links 2001* other family members are *Links 386*, *Links LS*, *Links LS 98*, *Links LS 99*, *Links Extreme* and *Links 2000*. If you can pick up any of these at a decent price (like for free) then you won't be disappointed. However we would advise you to avoid *Extreme* at all cost, unless you're looking for the *Carmageddon* of Golf simulations.

But it's not just *Links* with heritage. Jack Nicklaus has five other games to his name although, if we're honest, and after watching 'The Golden Bear' in last year's British Open at St Andrew's, we have to say that his swing has stood the test of time a lot better than his digital Doppelgangers.

PGA Championship Golf also has its little dynasty going. The programmers originally cut their teeth on a title called *Front Page Sports Golf* in 1997. After that

they created *Golf Pro 98*, which has ultimately metamorphosed into the *PGA Championship Golf* we now know and love today.

Finally, there's the *Tiger Woods* series, and yes you've guessed it, that started off under a different name too. Originally Electronic Arts' foray into the golfing market was known simply as *PGA Tour Pro*. Grab a big name license, slap Tiger Woods on the front, forget the 'Pro' and the change is complete.

PGA Tour Pro. Hardly any different to *Tiger Woods*.

Links 386. An erstwhile masterpiece.

The forerunner to *PGA Championship Golf* in all its glory.

CRAZY FOR YOU

One of the most frightening areas of PC golfing has to be the occasional appearance of crazy golf games. *Beavis & Butthead's Bunghole In One* is a nasty example of exactly how bad they can really be. More luck than judgement, this form of golf is nothing

more than a tedious example of trial and error gameplay.

Other whimsical offerings you should avoid in this tiresome sub-genre include *Mini Golf Master* and the 27-hole wacky marathon that is *3D Ultra Mini Golf Deluxe*. Just don't even think about it.

TRIPLE BOGEYS

Generally speaking you've got to accept that any golf game over two years of age will simply not do for the dedicated golf fan. Surprising then that some are still being flogged off, albeit at amazingly cheap prices.

Take *Actua Golf 2*. You can pick that up for £4.99. Ordinarily we'd warn you against such frivolity but, in this case, you can experience a golf game phenomenon that has never reappeared. We're talking real-time rain. Strange but true...

Other abominations include *Golden Tee Golf*, Greg Norman's *Ultimate Challenge Golf*, and *British Open Championship Golf*. Looking Glass Studios knew how to put a decent RPG together, shame we can't say the same for their golf game.

Not *Commandos* but *Mini Golf Master*.

Not the easiest putt in the world...

The only golf game with rain.

Greg Norman gets stuck in the bush again.

AND THE WINNER IS...

There's always one...

Despite absolutely everybody else agreeing on the overall winner, Prezzer remains defiant: "I refuse to pick a winner out of this lot because I don't like any of them. My benchmark was set years ago and, to this day, no golf game has come close. *David Leadbetter's Golf* wins it for me."

So, ancient Amiga flashback aside, the general consensus is this: *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2000* is at the bottom of the leader board with both Mark and Dave leading the brutal assault on its

name. Everyone agreed that budget buy *Jack Nicklaus 6: Golden Bear Challenge* is worth a bash, even if the control system did leave Martin on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

With *Links 2001* being written off for not keeping up with the times, *PGA Championship Golf 2000* nipped in to claim the coveted top prize. But that's not to say it can't be improved further. Still, as Keith says: "It's the closest thing to real golf." And that, after all, is what it's all about.

OVERALL WINNER
I might actually hole this one.

BUDGETZONE

Cheap quality entertainment is always available if you know where to look

⊙ **WORDS** Rhianna Pratchett (*EA Compilation No:1* by Martin Korda)

EA COMPILATION NO:6

⊙ £19.99 • Electronic Arts • Out now

This month's best buy is a damn fine, hearty three-course meal of a compilation. Get your juices flowing with the brilliant *Command and Conquer: Red Alert*, a *PC ZONE* Classic in its time that we would have taken home to meet our mothers if we hadn't sold them long ago for a taste of *Sid Meier's Alpha Centuri*. Sid came up trumps with a massive turn-based strategy game dubbed 'Civilization in space', which instantly became another *ZONE* Classic.

Chase those down with a dessert of *Wing Commander: Prophecy*, the series that introduced Mark Hamill to a generation who thought *Star Wars* was just a backstage punch up at the MTV awards. *Prophecy* was the fifth in the *Wing Commander* series that sadly marked the departure of Chris Roberts, the game's original designer, but still remains a cheeky little number full of gruelling space combat with a sprinkling of twisty turny plot developments. Instructions for consumption of this compilation are as follows: take one copy and kiss your life goodbye.

BEST BUY

PCZVERDICT 82%

Bang!

Civilisation in space anyone?

Hey, I look at the undead all day. Give a guy a break.

NOCTURNE

⊙ £9.99 • Xplosive • Out now

This is the game that launched a thousand laundry bills. *Nocturne* gives you all you need in a third-person action adventure. It does, however, contradict itself by having both excellent detail in the game's individual character composition (down to billowing coats and foggy breath) and poorly pre-rendered background graphics, meaning it's all too easy to loose yourself in bizarre camera angles.

The general fear-soaked atmosphere is further compounded by the hard-to- handle controls, which often mean you will be running round and round in a circle shooting wildly at anything except the ferocious, slathering beast that is eating your entrails like a Pot Noodle. All in all, *Nocturne* is an atmospheric, if rather RAM-consuming game, and now you can scare yourself witless at only a fraction of the price.

PCZVERDICT 78%

Flames, how novel. Unfortunately, that's where it ends.

Smarter and quicker, you just can't keep a good cop down.

GRAND THEFT AUTO 2

⊙ £9.99 • Xplosive • Out now

More for the *GTA* newbie than the connoisseur, this version of the anarchic auto classic combines all the fun of the original with, well, not a lot else really. The graphics are more fun and the music is infinitely better, but where the game does get more interesting is the incorporation of gangland politics, with three nasty gangs ruling the city and hiring you to do their dirty work. Unfortunately, if you make too many concessions to one gang you may find yourself eating Tarmac with an arse full of lead, and that's on a good day.

There's no doubt that the streets are meaner in *GTA 2*. As well as being tailed by the now smarter cops for your misdeeds, there always seems to be someone waiting around every corner to blow your brains out. You can even get your own car jacked. Is nothing sacred? It's fun stuff, but the look and feel is all too similar to the original game. It's basically *GTA* with go faster stripes.

PCZVERDICT 68%

Lie down you maniac.

SPECIAL OPS II: GREEN BERETS

⭐ £9.99 • Xplosive • Out now

Military sims have been popping up in abundance over the last couple of years and, thanks to the likes of *Rainbow Six*, *Rogue Spear* and *Spec Ops II*, the country is now fully equipped with an army of armchair soldiers ready to click into action. The original *Spec Ops* set the military sim trend back in 1998, but was quickly usurped by the likes of *Hidden & Dangerous*. *Green Berets* has

helped *Spec Ops* claw their way back down to the gritty depths of military espionage with a blend of realistic movement, sound and challenging gameplay. Always picked last for team sports? Never fear, this'll make a man of you my son.

PCZVERDICT 81%

Doesn't it make you feel all warm inside?

SPACE INVADERS 3D

⭐ £9.99 • Focus • Out now

Could *Space Invaders*, the grandfather of all computer games, be improved upon? Or should it remain forever pure, reminding us of a time when the words 'rail gun' hadn't entered our gaming vocabulary? For better or for worse, *Space Invaders* is back under the cunning title of... wait for it... *Space Invaders*. But before you do a double take and think that we're back when everyone was installing

arcade games like *Asteroids* and *Battlezone* onto their PCs, be reassured that the new *Space Invaders* takes the simplicity of the original game and gives it 3D graphics and half decent sound effects. Not for the arcade purists, but a cheery blast from the past for everyone else.

PCZVERDICT 59%

EA COMPILATION NO:1

⭐ £19.99 • Electronic Arts • Out now

Here's a prime example of the age old trick of bundling together three ageing sports sims, which anyone who cares already owns the latest versions of, and selling the package at a price which tries to fool you into thinking you're getting a bargain. *FIFA 99* has been surpassed by *FIFA 2000*, *Euro 2000* and *FIFA 2001*, but, still bares an uncanny resemblance to the latest version, only goalkeepers have a tendency to flap at shots like bewildered schoolboys.

The only thing that *World Cup Cricket 99* is good for is using the CD it comes on as a mirror to squeeze your spots onto, as you can bowl teams out for less than ten runs once you get the hang of the controls. As for *TW99 PGA Tour Golf*, it looks rubbish and is as much fun as playing with some. Avoid like you would a leachy dweeb.

PCZVERDICT 45%

Unfortunately, there's no option to swap the ball for a grenade.

SHANGHAI

⭐ £9.99 • Focus • Out now

In an age of 3D acceleration, advanced AI and realistic game play, it's amazing just how frustratingly addictive matching up small titles can be. *Shanghai* is a collection of four easy-to-learn but hard-to-master tile games. The titles are slightly more user-friendly than the classical versions, with astrological,

prehistoric and fantasy options, and even a specially designed layout for kids. In short, it's one of the most simple and addictive games ever to be invented.

PCZVERDICT 75%
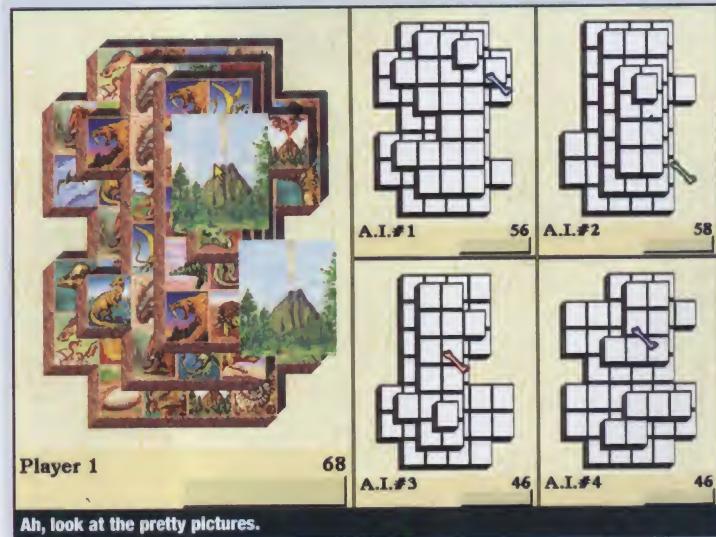
Ah, look at the pretty pictures.

FEEDBACK

Martin Korda listens to more of your views, gripes and complaints. The lucky, lucky man

SUDDEN STRIKE

REVIEWED #96, *PCZ* December
SCORE 86%

What we thought

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE "*Sudden Strike's* approach to resource management is so original and intuitive, you wonder why no one has thought of it before. As far as real-time strategy games go, it's as real as they get and, in terms of gameplay, up there with the likes of *Command & Conquer*, *Age Of Empires* and *Total Annihilation*."

What you said

"I have just prized myself off the computer to tell you what a fantastic game *Sudden Strike* is, the attention to detail deserves a prize in itself. I've followed *Sudden Strike* throughout its development and I can tell you that I was not disappointed with the outcome. I can see this game becoming huge. If you're thinking about parting with your hard-earned money to buy it, go now before the shop closes. There's nothing bad to say about it, unless you have any morals about losing hundreds of men in a minute."

Mac McCulley

⊙ *Sudden Strike*? Game of the month? Are you nuts? I played the demo and ran into the barrier in the middle of the road and got a man killed. I thought I'd be able to sort this out and so clicked on the siege Howitzer at the back of my force, from where I should have been able to destroy the barrier. I couldn't believe what I saw.

> **Counter-Strike is for wusses with slow reactions and no stomach for a good fight, and it's just been hyped up beyond all proportions**
>
> **CHRIS HOLMES ON *COUNTER-STRIKE***

The Howitzer has a range of approximately 100 yards. Problem is, so does a soldier and a tank. At this point, I decided to leave the game and never return to it again. It's absolute bollocks. If heavy armour on a battlefield could see no further than that it wouldn't stand a chance against infantry. This game is no better than *Tiberian Sun*. Hundreds of vehicles? If you're not going to bother including any statistics for each one you may as well have five. If you're thinking of buying this game, don't bother."

Anonymous, via email

Comment

Now, where to start. OK, firstly there's no such thing as a Game of the Month award in *PC ZONE*. I toyed with the idea of redirecting your email (which you didn't even bother putting your name on) to another PC games mag that does, but they didn't give the game an award and I couldn't be bothered. What really strikes me is that you're judging the full game on a demo. If you'd bothered to take the time to play the full version, I think you'd find that most of your comments are wrong. *Sudden Strike* is one of the most entertaining RTSs around, the vehicles are extremely varied and the AI is superbly balanced. And Mac, you're one of many readers who has written in with nothing but praise for the game, and like you, many of us here in the office can't stop playing it either.

COUNTER-STRIKE

REVIEWED #98, *PCZ* Christmas
SCORE 93%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC "So basically what we're saying is that above everything else, above the simplicity of the game, the intuitive nature of the controls and the surprising fluidity with which it plays online, *CS*'s true genius is that it pisses off Mac owners like you wouldn't believe."

What you thought

"I have to say that I'm new to the gaming world with my PC, as I have always relied on my consoles to fill that void. But recently my Nintendo 64 broke down and I had no choice but to turn to my PC, for the moment anyway. So off I went to the shops, and I was delighted to find compilations of games at reasonable prices. I purchased two compilations both containing six games. One had *FIFA* and *Need For Speed*, and another had *System Shock 2*, all of which I thought were impressive games. But then a friend introduced me to *Counter-Strike*. Do I need to say more? As you can imagine the other games are now history. Thanks to *Counter-Strike*, I've now cancelled my order for the long-awaited PlayStation 2 (why waste £300?). I have recently tried the demos off your CD and games that a friend has lent me, but after playing them for a short while, I just end up uninstalling them because I don't want to waste valuable *Counter-Strike* time.

"There is no other game as addictive as *Counter-Strike*, and if development companies want ➔

"Say Counter-Strike is the best online shooter or you're dead."

Rambo beat us to it.

Sudden Strike is the finest WWII RTS ever.
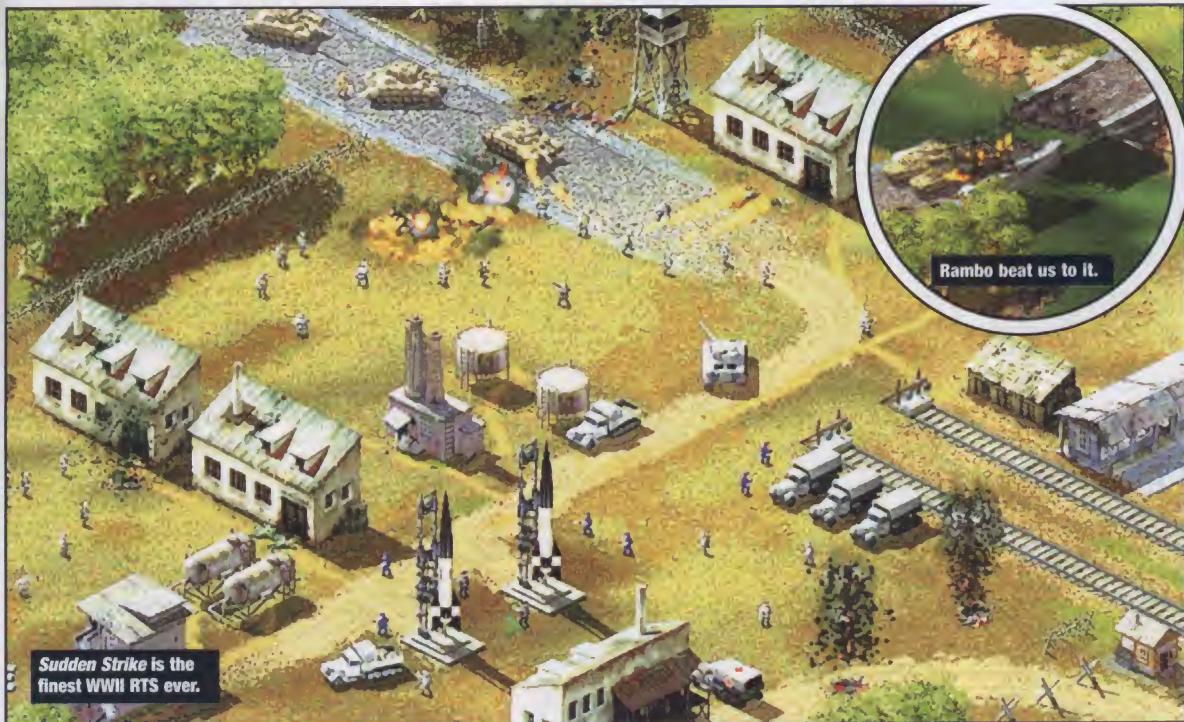
← to capture the market they really better get themselves organised because they're a long, long way off."

My reviews

Deux Ex	3%
Diablo 2	1%
Star Trek (any version)	0 %
Counter-Strike	110 %

Verdict: Play *Counter-Strike*, have fun, live.

ML

✪ "I just don't get it. I must be the only person in the world who can't understand all this fuss about *Counter-Strike*. It's far too slow and hardly ever exciting, and if you get shot a couple of times, you die and have to sit around waiting for everyone else to finish that game. It's boring in the extreme. Give me *Quake III* any day of the week. It's fast, exciting and the action never stops. *Counter-Strike* is for wusses with slow reactions and no stomach for a good fight, and it's just been hyped up beyond all proportions. Get your asses on to a *Quake III* server and I'll gut the lot of you."

Chris Holmes

Comment
Oh dear, oh dear, what have we here, then? A dissenter in the ranks? Chris, I'm sure you already know that *Counter-Strike* isn't supposed to be fast paced. OK, you may not like the game, but some of the best *Counter-Strike* players I know are also some of the best *QIII* players I've come up against, and I'm sure there would be no shortage of people, including

me, ready to take you up on your puerile challenge if you just name the time and the place. You will let us know what servers you play on now, won't you? As for you ML, you're right, *Counter-Strike* is the king of games at the moment, but three per cent for *Deus Ex*? You're having a laugh. Oh yes, and one more thing. There's no need to write a percentage sign like this o/o, which is what you did in your email. See that button in between the 4 and 6? Try pressing it along with shift next time, OK?

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND
REVIEWED #98, *PCZ* Christmas
SCORE 82%
What we thought
PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE "*Escape From Monkey Island* is an enjoyable, professionally created and reasonably funny game."
What you said
✪ "I recently bought *Escape From Monkey Island* and can't stop playing it. The 3D graphics work well and look great. The all new control system is an improvement over the previous games, and is easy to get to grips with. As with all the *Monkey Island* games, the story is great and the humour is still there, with lots of funny characters and a fantastic script. The only downside I can see is that it takes 1Gb of your hard-disk space.

This makes for a big game,

which takes a fair while to complete. But, overall, I think it's a great game and I would recommend it to anyone. A sure Grog Swilling classic."

Felix

✪ "At last we have an adventure game worth playing. After years of waiting, LucasArts has finally got its act together to produce this innovative and hilarious work of genius. The puzzles are some of the best I've ever seen in an adventure game, and I love the voices and characters, especially Elaine who's really foxy (and a little sexy, I think you'll agree). No one should go without playing this game."

P Staunton

Marc Duffy News

FA offer Man Utd cup place

Man Utd have been asked to consider a bye to the fifth round of the FA Cup because of their participation in the World Championship this season.

The club has accepted the proposal.

Five quid more than advertised? There goes my pocket money for the next ten weeks.

Comment
It's official, the adventure game is back – bigger and almost as good as ever. After years in the wilderness, it's good to see a return to form of a genre that had been deemed extinct. Let's just hope that *Escape From Monkey Island* is the first of many new, innovative and entertaining adventure games, and that other developers take the hint that people are still interested in titles like this one. Let's also hope that we don't get the usual influx of rubbish rehashes from developers desperate to cash in on the genres resurgence. What's the bet that we will, though?

CM 00/01
REVIEWED: #97, *PCZ* December
SCORE: 93%
What we thought
Z PC ZONE CLASSIC "That a series of text messages can cause genuine panic and elation is testament to the game's colossal power."
What you said
✪ So *CM 00/01* appears on the shelves at a price £5 higher than originally mooted. Was it worth the wait and the extra money? After two weeks of solid play, I can say that it wasn't. *CM3* was bugged to hell and *CM00/01* has plenty of problems. Having bought every game in the series, I find that this one is currently overwhelming and confusing. There's very little feedback from the board. One minute you're being congratulated and the next you're being sacked. Major inconsistencies abound and this is a release in desperate need of

patching. It's still very good, but not as good as it thinks it is. Still, at least with the editor I can put right the errors that I can see in some of the squads."

P Knight, via email

✪ "I need help, I think that I have a serious problem. *Championship Manager* has taken over my life, to the point that I'm losing my friends because I never go out any more and even my girlfriend is threatening to leave me if I don't play the game less and spend more time with her. I realise I need to cut down, but I can't. I assure you this isn't a prank email, and I'm desperately hoping you might be able to advise me as to how to cut down on this life-sapping game."

John Goodall

Comment
For goodness sake, John, be a man. Switch off your machine, phone your mates and girlfriend and get a life. Of course games are addictive, but when they start compromising your whole lifestyle, then it's time to take a good hard look at your reflection in your monitor, and say to yourself: "Is this really worth it?" *Champ Manager* is hugely addictive, but at the end of the day it's just a game, and you can switch it off any time you like. However, you can't switch off the real world. Get a grip.

As for the fact that most shops were charging £5 more, we couldn't agree with you more. Eidos recommended a price that was different to Sports Interactive and if you've got any brains you'll buy it online where you can still get it for under £20. **PCZ**

You should be grateful. Some men have to pay for this sort of thing.

ALWAYS ON MY MIND

⚫ **ONLINE** Richie Shoemaker

I've been trying to think of something to write about other than *Counter-Strike*, but this is proving difficult. Last month we reviewed Version 1.0 of this most popular of *Half-Life* modifications, a mod that was going to be released as a full game in the UK, then wasn't. Gameplay has announced it will have the US release for £17.99. It comes with other mods, like *Team Fortress Classic* and *Firearms*, all of which you can already download, but if you've still to buy *Half-Life* and want to join in, it's a good buy.

With my PC back in working order I've been online playing the beautiful game (*CS* that is) and although I've recently scaled down my time playing the game, my enthusiasm seems to be on the increase again. When will the madness end? Maybe with the release of *Team Fortress 2*, *Global Operations*, or *Planetside*, or even *Tribes 2*. We may not be exactly spoilt for choice when it comes to team-based online first-person shooters at the moment, but the future's bright.

Outside of *Counter-Strike*, both *Ultima Online* and *EverQuest* are gearing up for big updates, and looking at online RPGs as a whole, this year is going to be huge, especially with the highly anticipated Euro RPGs *Anarchy Online* and *Neocron* likely to be released later on – we'll hopefully be beta testing the game soon, but until then, we've plenty in this issue of *PC ZONE* to keep you interested. Next month is our 100th issue and we've something special in store. Keep 'em peeled.

PCZONLINE CONTENTS

ONLINE REVIEWS POLICY

When it comes to mods and total conversions (TCs) for games such *Half-Life*, they are often released in beta form (ie unfinished) and are generally being updating constantly. When we review them we will always try to take into consideration that they are often worked on by teams working just for the love of it and released free for our enjoyment. Even so, there is a lot of pap out there and downloading such things can often be a waste of good surfing time.

Similarly with retail online games such as *EverQuest*, code is always being updated and although we can't provide regular updates we will try to review major ones as and when they occur.

NEWS

You can shoot out lights and leave your opponents in darkness.

In terms of the weapons, 36 are planned, all of which are officially licensed (whatever that means) and cover everything from handguns to assault weapons.

You will be able to choose from six special roles, plus a Commander, as well as your regular *Counter-Strike* jack-of-all-trades grunt.

GLOBAL OPERATIONS

Barking Dog bites back at *Counter-Strike*

Having cut its canine teeth helping out with beta 5 of *Counter-Strike* and now gone pro with the recently released semi-sequel to the ground-breaking *Homeworld*: *Cataclysm*, you would have thought Barking Dog Studios deserved a little winter break. Maybe it does, but unbeknown to the gaming community the team have been working on a new game of their own, one that in the words of its producer will be 100 times better than *Counter-Strike*. That being the case, we may have to rethink our scoring system. Or put *Counter-Strike* down to 1 per cent, which ain't gonna happen. Anyway we'll cross that bridge when we come to it.

Using the latest version of the LithTech 2.0 engine (last seen in *No One Lives Forever*, reviewed in issue 98), *Global Operations* will be a team-based multiplayer game seeing terrorists again taking on counter-terrorists across a series of levels, the aim of which will be to eliminate the opposing team. Popular game types will include bomb defuse, hostage rescue and VIP escort, but to these the developer of *Global Operations* plan to switch roles. For instance one map set in Northern Ireland will task the IRA (the 'real' IRA we assume) with saving one of their officers who's being escorted to a British base by British Special Forces. Other world-renowned hotspots will feature too, with UN peacekeepers fighting Lebanese terrorists in Beirut and the DEA fighting drug barons in Columbia.

So far, so *Counter-Strike* then. What may set *Global Ops* apart, however, may be the fact that rather than have one objective in each map, there may be several. Also in VIP or hostage rescue missions, the VIPs will be computer-controlled bots, so as a terrorist you will have to keep a close eye on your hostages or they may make a break for it when you're not looking and if hardened CTs are rubbing their hands with glee at such a prospect, be aware that even under your protection, rescued prisoners may well bolt if you come under surprise attack.

Those of you still unwilling to savour the delights of online *Counter-Strike* will be pleased to hear that Barking Dog is planning to not only make *Global Ops* a far more user-friendly game, but its also planning to include a sizable single-player game, with AI bots not only filling in vacant slots online, but whole missions designed with the lone player in mind.

REAL TOURNAMENT

In a nod to greater realism, 32 real-world special forces units and terrorist groups will be available to play on 16 maps, each with their very own uniform specific to certain maps. You won't for instance be able to play as Basque separatists unless you play the Spanish map.

Furthermore, rather than choose a skin, buy your weapons and wander off, each team member can, if they so wish, choose a specialist role for their character (medic, sniper, heavy weapons, demolitions, commando or reconnaissance), each of which looks different and will have specific skills and access to certain weapons at start up. Unlike *Team Fortress Classic* however, you will as a medic still be able to pick up a sniper rifle from the battlefield, you just won't be able to buy one at the beginning of the level

> **In a nod to greater realism, 32 real-world special forces and terrorist groups will be available to play on 16 maps, each with their own uniform**

and you probably wouldn't be able to hit your own foot with it anyway.

And it gets better, Barking Dog is nicking Valve's ideas (allegedly) from *Team Fortress 2* and will, as well as six characters classes, allow one player from each side to act as commander, who is able to watch each of his players movements through a window on his monitor, relayed by cameras mounted into the helmets of his troops. The commander will have no direct input into the game aside from directing his troops across the map, either by real-time voice commands or by a menu or typed commands. One nice touch is that the cameras can become damaged by shrapnel, or even survive intact when the soldier dies and falls to the ground. (Images of Lt Gorman from *Aliens* spring immediately to mind: "Fall back in squads to the APC...")

One aspect we're not quite sure of is the plan to have player's respawn at the start point every two minutes, rather than the dead just waiting it out until the next game. The idea it seems is to help new players, but new players will learn a lot more by watching *Counter-Strike* style than they will twiddling their thumbs at the start, even if the wait for the next game may be shorter. That's just our view however and with release scheduled for July, at the earliest, we're quite sure there will be plenty of changes and hopefully a few nice surprises. Check out the developers website at **www.barking-dog.com** for more information.

Choose from three types of armour, plus laser sights and all the usual gubbins.

If you want to join a bomber crew online, *WarBirds III* looks the business.

iEN look like taking a few fans back from Aces High.

WARBIRDS

Current one going cheap, new version out soon

While we sit around and wait for *WarBirds III* to go into open beta (at present the best guess for this will be around Feb/March 2001) there have been a fair few changes to the current version 2.70. The most important change has been switching from a pay-by-the-hour system which, at £1.50 per hour, made it only slightly cheaper than cocaine, to a flat rate of US$25 a month (roughly £15) which puts it in the realms of virtually everybody.

iEN has also added about four new arenas, ranging from the most popular WWII Arena which pits the historical plane sets of the Allies and Axis against each other, some more sandbox arenas such as Fighter Ops with virtually arcade mode flight, GPS and so forth. The programmers have also been working on the gunnery, with full physics' modelling of the bullets, and all new damage

models. However, there is still many a flame war going on with regards to how the planes should – and shouldn't – fly, with the main fansite at **http://agw.dogfighter.com** being the site of many a BBQ.

WarBirds III looks – at least from the screen shots trickling out from iEN – to be the first of the 'new breed' of flight sim, with only Blue Byte's primarily offline Russian flight sim *IL-2* coming close. With the models being done via 3D Studio Max, in theory, Joe Public could create models and add them to *WarBirds III*, the same way Microsoft's *Combat Flight Sim* did. However, seeing as *WarBirds* is a sim, the chances of someone getting accurate data on how they should fly will cause plenty more in the way of arguments. It's nice to know that, no matter how far games advance, the same old squabbles rage. Check out the game at **www.warbirdsiii.com**

The eyes have it.
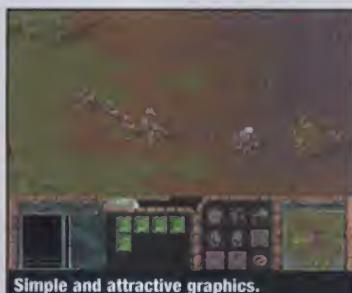
Simple and attractive graphics.

STRIFESHADOW

Think *Starcraft* online. With goblins

Out, apparently, very soon, is the multiplayer-only real-time strategy game *Strifeshadow: Tournament Edition*. Why *Tournament Edition* God alone knows, since no edition has been released as of yet, but developer Ethermoon is hoping that, if the game takes off, a single-player version will

follow, a possibility thanks to a leaning towards low-end PCs, fast-paced strategic play, rather than ponderous base-building and three very distinct races to play as.

One new idea that Ethermoon is touting is its 'training videos', a series of annotated game recordings designed to get players up to speed quickly, rather than have to play a series of tutorials where little is taken in apart from a few control keys.

Planned to be released as a fee-payable downloadable game rather than via retailers, the game will be free to play. If you want to know more, and we're quite sure some of you will, **www.ethermoon.com** should be your first stop.

There are three distinct sides to play as.

STAR WARS ONLINE

Verant's online *Star Wars* RPG has been named as *Star Wars Galaxies*. And thank the lord, the game will be using a new 3D engine (well *EverQuest*'s is starting to look pretty old). Interestingly *Star Wars Galaxies* will be the name of a whole range of games, the first of which is due to go live sometime during 2002.

Although some way off, the official *Galaxies* site has just been launched (no screenshot as yet though) and, according to the official FAQ, we will be able to 'fight stormtroopers, hang out in a cantina, build droids, and explore the galaxy…', even play as a Wookie. And, in case you were wondering, the Battle Droids and Jar-Jar Binks will not be making an appearance. Find out more at **www.station.sony.com/starwars.**

Become a Jedi or a fish. The choice is yours.

WESTWOOD TESTY

Sci-fi online strategy from the RTS masters

Having been burnt in the past with the rather pointless *C&C: Sole Survivor*, an online action game so poor it never saw the light of day in the UK, Westwood has decided to try another online game. What it's called or when we might see it is open to speculation, but with the Las Vegas based developer having recently invited fans to beta test the game, we can assume that a 2001 release is highly likely. An isometric RTS is our favourite choice, another game based in the *C&C* universe using the same engine last seen in *Red Alert 2*, perhaps in line with the game's World Domination mode, set across a persistent world, or series of worlds. Westwood's announcement did say that the game is a "science fiction-themed massively multiplayer online persistent state world" and a Voodoo II 3D card will be a minimum requirement. Everything else is pure guesswork, but we're sure to hear more soon, in the meantime visit **www.westwood.com**.

Blue cube alert!

The graphics are simplistic.

No screenshots yet, but we reckon *Red Alert 2* looks pretty close.

ACE OF ANGELS

It has taken a small team of five people over four years to create *Ace Of Angels* and, with arena-based beta testing currently ongoing, it seems the end is in sight for Flying Rock Entertainment.

Similar in scope to the promising *Jumpgate* (**www.netdevil.com**), *Ace Of Angels* allows up to 200 people to trade and fight their way across the galaxy. Massively multiplayer this isn't, but the aim, it seems, is to achieve a closer tie between gamers than currently exists in games like *EverQuest* and the aforementioned *Jumpgate*. Interesting too is the fact that real NASA flight data has been incorporated, although we hope the flight model will be a lot more forgiving than that fact would suggest.

There are currently ten races that players can choose from with 14 types of craft to pilot, each of which can be upgraded with the latest hi-tech gadgetry. *Ace Of Angels* also has a novel way of treating hyperspace travel, you actually have to manually pilot your ship as it moves at light speed, and time will pass quicker for you than others moving under more conventional means.

Right now the game is being tested simply as a deathmatch game and, although graphically there a some concerns, the next stage of testing will offer *Elite*-style trading with the story and campaigns added soon after, along with new ships (90 of various sizes are planned), extra upgrades and many mores goods for trade. No release date is yet known, but you can sign up or just see what's in store by pointing your browser at **www.flyingrockllc.com**

COUNTER-STRIKES BACK AT CHEATS

Are you feeling lucky, punk?

"I think you're giving *Counter-Strike* too much publicity in your magazine." So started a recent email from a chap calling himself Scranton. He had his reasons though: "I used to play this mod quite regularly online, but now most servers are corrupted by cheats. Although it's still one of the best mods around, if not the best, I have seen on some servers, a chicken with a Colt M4, a helicopter and players who clone themselves as hostages. Loads of people use the 'wall' cheat, the list goes on."

Cliffe, one of the two originators of *Counter-Strike* is well aware of the cheating problems that have erupted since the release of v1.0 of the world's most popular mod and says that, with the help of *Half-Life* creators Valve, they are looking into the problem. "Don't worry, the issues facing *CS* now are being addressed head on," he said.

Our young Mr Scranton went on to suggest we download a copy of Punkbuster and, although we found it too late to include on this months CD, the 124K file for players, or 144K for servers is a fairly small download and, as Scranton says, "If all the honest players download it, then all the real players who are sick of these cheating twats will come back online."

Run alongside *Half-Life*, Punkbuster works best when both the servers and the client (players) are running it. If a server is using Punkbuster, certain cheats can be detected and, if the players playing on that server don't have Punkbuster running, they will simply be kicked off or at the very least 'outed' as not being Punkbuster compliant.

Punkbuster is approved by *CS* meister Cliffe himself and you can download the files and find out more by visiting **www.punkbuster.com**

It may look like a chicken...

At least this cheat is visible...

PUNKBUSTER
ONLINE COUNTERMEASURES

PUNKBUSTER

Altogether now, 'Who you gonna call...?'

great opportunity to go on a mass killing spree without the risk of being sent to prison.

Great artillery, but the voice communications are very basic, obviously intended to appeal to Americans

TRIBES 2

BETA TEST

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Dynamix
PUBLISHER Sierra
WEBSITE www.tribes2.com
RELEASE DATE March/April

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Massive outdoor environments with dozens of players fighting it out
- Improved 3D engine
- Focus on team-orientated gameplay
- It won't all be online

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Then check out these sights

www.tribes2players.com Perhaps the best fansite in the world.

www.tribesplayers.co.uk This is its Euro counterpart

www.tribesnation.co.uk A Sleek and up-to-date UK site. A must-see.

www.tribalwar.com *Tribes, Tribes 2*, mods and skins.

Tony Lamb joins up for online action

So far, the first-person shooter genre has proven to be the most popular multiplayer game online and it's not difficult to see why – you get to kill people without really hurting them. They might be your friends, they might be complete strangers – you can't tell – but you can riddle them with bullets, shoot them with rockets or simply take off their head with one clean shot. Fun doesn't get much messier. Well, not in this magazine, anyway.

The original *Tribes* was one such game and came in this country as a freebie bundled alongside Dynamix's mech-based blastfest *Starseige*. Back in issue 76, we cast a critical eye over the game to see whether it would earn as big a thumbs-up over here as it was getting on the other side of the Atlantic. The Americans were going loopy over it, but as the recent electoral fun and games over there has shown, they definitely aren't the most ideal bunch to ask for an informed opinion.

And it has to be said, *Tribes 2* is, just like its still very popular two-year-old predecessor, a very American game; very gung-ho despite the need for teamwork, the characters sport body armour more in keeping with American sports than real-world combat and with voice communication on the menu, you can be sure to hear more 'awesomes', 'dudes' and 'I'm gonna open a can of whoop-ass on you', than you will 'steady on chap' or 'tea, anyone?'.

Overall, *Tribes* did OK over here, but its lack of player classes meant that what was designed to be a co-operative, squad-based game descended into a run-of-the-mill deathmatch with all the players doing their own thing. Consequently, the masses failed to realise that had they made the effort to play the game as was intended, they would have had a far more rewarding experience.

We liked the fact that the playing areas were genuinely large – the sky was there to fly in and shoot from rather than just a graphic thrown in after the game was finished – but found that it was possible to wander off for miles and not see any action before suddenly blundering into the edge of the map. Server support was good, but again, the vast maps meant that unless the server was full, you'd

PRETTY GOOD

A quick look at the screenshots here will show you that *Tribes 2* is certainly pretty. If you've got a bitchin' PC (sorry, I've been picking up the lingo) and suitably adrenaline-charged graphics card then even in beta form, the visual improvement courtesy of its new graphics engine will make your jaw go wobbly and your eyes stand out on stalks. Sadly, the beta-testing opportunity has now passed, but with some 1,000 slack-jawed, bug-eyed guinea pigs wandering around, the evidence is looking promising so far. The same sense of scale evident in *Tribes 2* has struck us all in the original game, and with the power of the current crop of graphics

> **Unless the players learn to work as a team, *Tribes 2* could go the way of the original and become a cult game, relying on hardcore support without ever reaching the mainstream**

probably get bored. Every bonus had a major downside: flying vehicles – difficult controls; jetpacks – limited fuel; weapons – not enough and too weak. With competition from the likes of *Quake II* and *Half-Life*, poor old *Tribes* just had too many flaws to hit the heights it was capable of.

So, allowing for the unrealised potential of its predecessor, we had mixed thoughts about what might be achieved by *Tribes 2*. Would the developers sort out the gripes that had bedeviled the first outing, or would we yet again see a game that could have been great, just not make the grade? Would they even care – the undiscerning American masses would probably lap it up, anyway.

cards, there hasn't been a need to hide everything behind an obscuring veil of fog. Sure, it's still there, but it isn't the total pain in the arse that it was before. Heaven forbid, it even seems to be sensibly used. The visual treat continues, the characters are gloriously detailed, the buildings quite magnificent if improbable in design at times, and the vehicles suitably neat, too. Weapons are better than the first game, but having been spoilt by the fantastic artillery of *Quake III*'s Rail Gun we reckon they're still not beefy enough. We might not need *Quake III* firepower, but we've seen more frightening stuff in our local newsagent.

The gadgets and toys on offer are a major bonus.

The playing areas are large with vast open skies to fly and shoot fro

Vehicles have in fact seen a major change. Multiplayer games at the moment are crying out for in-game toys that can actually be used, and *Tribes 2* goes some distance to addressing this. There are now six vehicles, three airborne and three land based. In the air there are fast and agile fighters, bombers (with a tail gun and proper bombs no less) and a heavy transport for when you need to take the kitchen sink. The ground forces are correspondingly blessed with an anti-gravity bike affair, chunky supply truck and heavyweight tank. This is an improvement, but we're hoping that there will be more in the final release. We're greedy that way.

BETA BE GOOD

For a beta, *Tribes 2* plays extremely well. Making big allowances for the fact that patches seemed to be released on an almost hourly basis (survivable if you have a fast connection but otherwise worthy of a Nobel Prize for patience), it was stable too. There were crashes, but with any frequently-patched beta that shouldn't come as a surprise and when the game hits the shelves the number of patch upgrades should be minimal. With Sierra at the helm, it makes sense that *Tribes 2* is being designed with the third-party map enthusiast in mind. A custom-map generator is included and there are hopes that the legions of game modifiers out there will give *Tribes 2* the sort of longevity that *Team Fortress Classic* and *Counter-Strike* have lent to publishing stablemate *Half-Life*.

With the beta-test now suspended, the game can now be sorted out. There were crashes and bugs, but the potential for a massively popular online game is definitely there. But one nagging doubt still remains – co-operation. To make *Tribes 2* into the hit it should be, there needs to be a way to overcome basic human nature and the tendency of players to go and

The ground forces abound with heavy tankers and chunky supply trucks.

grab the most glamorous weapon before setting off to win the war single-handedly. At least the sheer size of the maps makes sniping less effective, but unless players can actually learn to work as a team, *Tribes 2* could go the way of the original and become a cult game only, relying on hardcore support without ever reaching the mainstream. That would be a shame, but then it's our job to make sure that doesn't happen. So for the one-on-one Quakesters out there, don't bother, it will leave you frustrated. *Counter-Strike* regulars in the mood for some sci-fi action, however, would do well to take a look. We'll be going in soon. 𝗣𝗖𝗭

The graphics are a real visual feast, while retaining the sense of scale of the original. The vast spaces also make sniping less effective.

REVIEWS

Just about to lose the flag.

Before joining, you get a chance to snoop on the opposition.
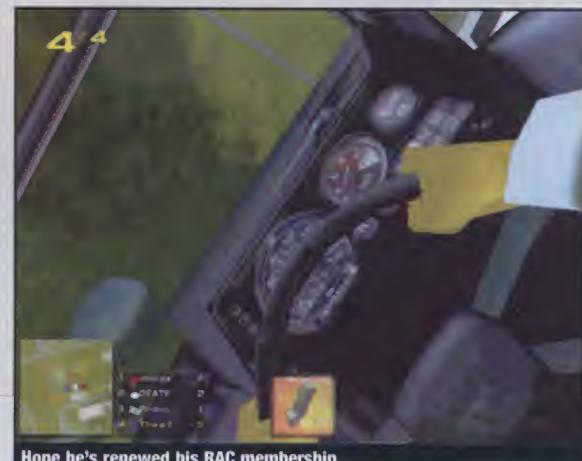
Hope he's renewed his RAC membership.

INSANE V1.0

★ £25.99 • Free demo available from www.codemasters.com • Out now

Insane marks the launch of Codemasters' new multiplayer gaming network. Phil Wand takes an online test drive

Insane is a good word to describe my mental derangement after coming into contact with the launch title for Codemasters' new online gaming service. It point-blank refused to work on two Windows 2000 machines, and no amount of reinstalling, restarting, tinkering or swearing would cure it. But don't worry about that, I'm probably the only person who uses Win2K on a day-to-day basis. Exacerbated, an old Windows 98 box with no balls and a dodgy ticker was hauled from its resting place, dusted down and saddled up, and with a little patience we eventually got going.

Insane (*PCZ* #97, 78%) is the first title to be featured on the Codemasters Multiplayer Network (CMN), a free online service matching games to gamers. To be frank, neither the idea or

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

the service itself is particularly innovative, especially if you're a regular user of something like Cavedog's *Boneyards*. At its core, CMN is a chat-based interface between you and other people,

> **"Neither the idea or the service is particularly innovative, especially if you're a regular user of something like Cavedog's *Boneyards*"**

and as such is nothing new.

It is, however, beautifully presented and fully functional, and lacks all the useless paraphernalia that so often accompany this type of program. The front end is clean, crisp and dead easy to navigate, and you can get straight into playing with a minimum amount of clicking. You can also track your buddies and get instant access to your points and position on the championship ladder.

ROUND THE BEND
Because of the nature of *Insane*, ping times are of little concern, dropped packets and the odd connection glitch are ironed out as you bounce over hills and down dales. Every game we played was hydraulically smooth and trouble-free, to the extent that you would be hard pressed to distinguish between online and offline modes. Get into gear, accelerate and in no time at all you're hustling across rough terrain, snapping at the rear axle of the guy in front of you.

All manner of vehicle types are available to you, from the nippy Baja Bug, to the bulky eight-wheeler truck. Each car is beautifully animated, with humps and ruts causing the wheels and tyres to bounce into and out of their arches. Great fun.

In our experience, it's wise to stick with something hardy and familiar like the Cairo or Blaze. The Cairo is essentially a Land Rover in desert colours; the Blaze a big American SUV. Neither would win any prizes for top speed, but what they lack in outright oomph, they make up for with stability. In the case of the Cairo, there's no roof and it's a real hoot to watch the animated limbs of the driver flail at the wheel as you career down bumpy slopes or roll the thing onto its side. Change the camera view to inside the cockpit and the juddering spine and bouncing buttocks of the poor driver are even more convincing.

The most popular game variant on CMN right now seems to be Return The Flag, where you drive over flags and return them to predetermined points on the map. The essence of each game is the same as that of Dave's review in the Christmas issue, only played over the Internet against other people. If you already have a copy, and have gone hacking across the countryside against computer players or over a local network, you've pretty much seen it all. Although there's nothing more entertaining than asking an unknown opponent, "Who's your daddy?" and being met with a flood of abuse. It's what being online is all about. **PCZ**

PCZVERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Mad fun • Effortless online play • Ping not an issue

⊖ **DOWNERS** Windows 2000 issues • Lock ups • Bugger all technical help

80 The best online 4 x 4 x far

SACRIFICE

£34.99 • Interplay • Out now (extra maps available from www.sacrifice.net)

When is a real-time strategy game not a real-time strategy game?
Richie Shoemaker has the answer

While most game developers weave their magic from plush, air-conditioned offices or filth-strewn hovels, Shiny Entertainment seems to exist almost on another planet. Against the plethora of games theirs have to compete with, Shiny's clutch of games (*Messiah*, *MDK*, *Earthworm Jim*) have always held a dark and comic charm that seems always to appeal to a certain type of player. *Sacrifice* is no different. Equally, it has always been difficult to categorise Shiny's games. Since *Earthworm Jim*, whose roots were entrenched in platform action, Shiny has trod a path through

thought we'd give it a chance and take it on online. Perhaps there is something worth salvaging from this incredibly beautiful yet criminally vacant title after all.

CHAOS REIGNS

Immediately we find *Sacrifice* picking up lost points. With the story and unforgiving AI dropped the simple ideals shine. In essence the gameplay is no different from *Chaos* or *Magic & Mayhem*, you have a wizard and through controlling Manaliths and harvesting souls you make your way across the map until your

Blood everywhere.

Looks like my altar has just about had it.

This is hardcore, if you don't put the time in, you might as well not bother.

all-seeing and all-knowing, so Shiny has made the AI tactically inept. Bad form chaps. No such problems online, of course, there may be plenty of simpletons out there, but at least they have personality.

Sacrifice as a multiplayer experience is bloody hard work, though. Once you get used to things (after about 20 hours) though it really is fantastic fun, but the simple fact remains that rather than being a true strategy game, *Sacrifice* is really about action. The ones who will often win are those who can turn around their orders quicker rather than those who know how to make use of terrain and the creatures under their control. Put the work in and if it your eyes don't burst, you'll probably have a lot of fun. **PCZ**

> **"As a single-player game it lacks serious tactical depth, but where it really comes into it's own is as a multiplayer game"**

a shadowy underworld and while *Sacrifice* could be summarised as a fantasy real-time strategy game, the fantasy is light years away from the goblin-infested realms we all too often have to plod through and as a real-time strategy game it sits nearer the likes of *Quake* than it does *Command & Conquer*. From the twisted minions you conjure and command, to the alien world your creations must traverse, *Sacrifice* succeeds in taking you to another dimension and while it is humorous, original in feel and look and uncommonly pleasing to watch, as a single-player game it lacks serious tactical depth, but where it really comes into its own is as a multiplayer game.

Which is why after feeling more than a little disappointed when we reviewed the game a couple of months back, we

opponent's altar is destroyed. Unlike *Chaos* and its more modern remakes, however, your wizard is always in the thick of things, which adds a real immediacy that action fans will love. Unfortunately the graphics are so colourful and busy and the control method so complex that to get anywhere against anyone even half-decent takes serious practice. I personally haven't played a game with such a steep learning curve in ages, thanks mostly to having so much on on-screen. Watching *Sacrifice* over someone's shoulder the game is truly beautiful, playing it for the first few hours just gives you a headache.

What helps *Sacrifice* as a multiplayer game is human opposition. The AI wizards obviously don't have to worry about control systems and aren't impressed by graphics – they're

PCZVERDICT

● **UPPERS** Fast • Beautiful • Runs very well online • Free maps available
● **DOWNERS** Strategists look elsewhere • Not for the novice • Repetitve

76 More mayhem than magic

Even online *Sacrifice* looks amazing.

Sacrifice doesn't like personal firewall software.

The best new releases and DVDs reviewed The **new** movie magazine

HOTDOG

JANUARY 2001 £2.75

DRUGS IN MOVIES

Stars who crashed & burned
The making of Trainspotting
Hollywood dealers
Rave films: agony and Ecstasy

Jack Nicholson
The King – as you've never, ever seen him before

'We whacked this chicken with an axe...'
Withnail by Bruce Robinson

PENELOPE CRUZ AND THE
SEXIEST
EUROPEAN ACTRESSES

WIN! A luxury weekend in New York and a surround-sound system
PLUS Joe Pesci Schwarzenegger Nicolas Cage Pulp Fiction

The new movie magazine.

iFG

Once you're making a profit, you can pretty much leave your business to it, but beware if someone moves in on your local markets.
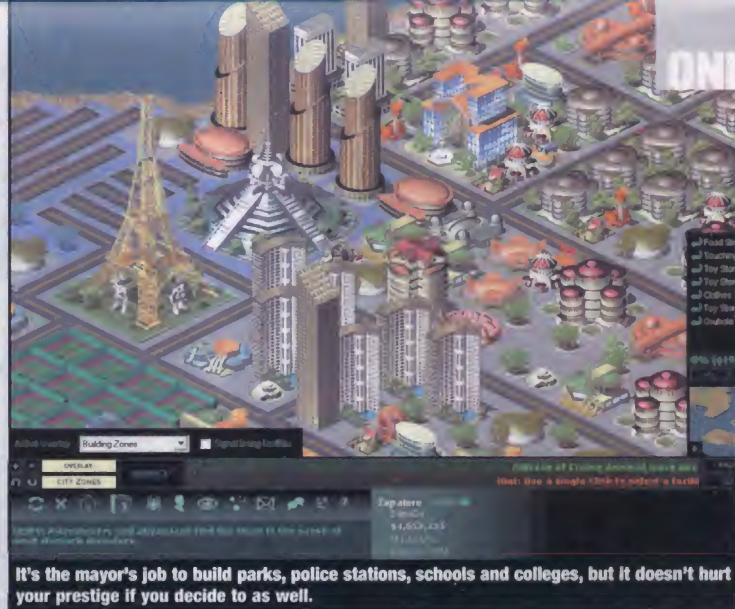
It's the mayor's job to build parks, police stations, schools and colleges, but it doesn't hurt your prestige if you decide to as well.

You can overlay the map with all sorts of information, here there seems plenty of room for a new toy store.

Each city has a town hall where you can find out what the population is and what markets are still untapped.

It's the Mayor who decides what can be built where.

STARPEACE

⭐ £29.99 (plus monthly fee after first month) • Monte Cristo www.starpeace.net • Out now

Tight-fisted and totally broke, *Richie Shoemaker* tries his luck online

Though it may look similar, *Starpeace* is a lot more than a simple *SimCity* clone. Set across a series of planets, the aim is very much about the acquisition of wealth rather than just looking out for the well-being of the local population, though that too is pretty important. Strangely, you start off with quite a tidy sum,

you've found a gap in a particular market, it's time to build a headquarters and, hopefully, start making some serious dough.

Easier said than done. Although there are plenty of hints and tips online, the game is far from simple to learn and the manual is pretty poor compared to the documentation that we had from the preview version. The confusion at the start isn't helped

> ## Starpeace isn't all about making money, once you've made a name for yourself, you can start thinking about a move into politics

$100 million, but it's amazing how quickly that disappears as you lay down your roots for a successful business empire. Before that though, you must first scout out each of the planets (of which there are currently four), the cities across them and the businesses that are currently set up. Once

by the fact that from the off you are given a huge range of money-making options to choose from, from setting up residential blocks to retail outlets and heavy industry, for each of which you have to set wage levels, supply set ups and prices. Of course much of this is automated if you

can't be bothered, but even so it takes a good few hours until you realise that far from building the next PepsiCo overnight, it's best to build a few shops, keep an eye on things until you start making a profit and then log off and come back when the money has stacked up (bearing in mind you can keep up to date while you are away from your home PC if you have a PC at work, or a WAP/SMS-enabled phone). Once you've paid back the $100 Million, that's when things start getting interesting.

YOU SCRATCH MY BACK...

Thankfully, *Starpeace* isn't all about making money. Once you've made a name for yourself, which shouldn't be difficult seeing as there are currently less than 1,000 people playing the game, you can start thinking about a move into politics. Each town has its own mayor, elected by the business leaders in each region. Those in office are the ones who set taxes, decide where businesses can or can't build

and zone their cities to make sure industry is kept away from high-class housing for example. Get on the wrong side of a mayor then, and you may just find your company squeezed out of existence. But when it comes to election time, you can have your revenge by backing another candidate – so long as they 'help' you out once in office. Or you could kiss a few babies and run for office yourself, maybe even become President one day.

One thing that *Starpeace* is seriously lacking is atmosphere. Although quite a social game in that you can chat, send emails and even talk to other players, there isn't much in the way of real interaction and cooperation. It would be helpful, for instance, if you could buy out other companies or buildings that they might want to get rid off. Annoying too is the way the server is backed up almost every half an hour, during which nothing can be done apart from looking around the map. Two minutes of waiting around may not sound like a long time, but when you're just about to finish some research, or see a building completed, it does get on your tits.

Though there are a few bugs and incomplete parts of the game (no tutorial for example), for all that *Starpeace* still remains one of the most engrossing and

original online titles to be released. The first few hours are bewildering and even after many more there are many hidden complexities, but after a month, when it comes to start paying out (around £6 a month with discounts if you sign up for longer) you should have a pretty good grasp on how things work. And the good news is that once you've set up a business on every world and in every city, the developers will have added even more content, we're promised, a criminal element as well.

For now, though, the old adage 'you have to spend money to make money' rings true and, although investing in a copy of *Starpeace* is unlikely to make you rich, if you're fan of *SimCity*, you will get a lot of enjoyment out of it in return. 𝗣𝗖𝗭

PCZVERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Incredibly in-depth resource management • Go from business to politics • Constantly evolving

⊖ **DOWNERS** Steep learning curve • Heavy on the micromanagement • Sometimes slow • Needs more players

78 Very enjoyable if you're prepared to work hard

MODWATCH

Rounding up the latest and greatest freebie add-ons: *Tony Lamb*

In many ways, mods represent the lifeblood of games, revealing the dedication and enthusiasm of developers and fans alike. The knowledge and skills of many of those involved are often donated for free, the sole reward being that of seeing the mod take shape and succeed. For some it is purely a learning process, for others a serious investment of time and effort that might lead to a new career, or the enhancement of an existing one. Some mods become so successful that they all but eclipse the original game – look at the huge online support for *Counter-Strike* and *Team Fortress Classic,* for example – while others become little more than the author's pet project to be taken out and lovingly dusted off when there's nothing good on TV. Whatever the success of a mod, it means that someone enjoyed a game so much that they felt inspired to add something to it.

This month we've started with some biggies – these are mods for some of the most popular online games – but in future we'll be spreading the net far and wide to cover just about any mods that our fevered scratching about the web digs up. You name it, if the game has mods, we'll hunt them down, slap them on a plate and poke 'em with sticks until they scream. That's what we do... and we love every minute of it. All the mods featured here, and next month's collection will be on issue 100's cover CD.

SCIENCE & INDUSTRY V0.96C

For: Half-Life
Website: www.planethalflife.com/si
Rating: ○○○○○

Science & Industry has the honour of being one of the oldest of the *Half-Life* mods and it has always been great fun. The premise is simple – you need scientists to develop your weapons, and the objective is to 'steal' them from your opponents' base. Unfortunately for you, the enemy team will be trying to do exactly the same thing with yours. Thankfully, the scientists are a cowardly bunch and, even when scared by gunfire, won't run far away, so capturing them isn't too difficult. One element that has changed from previous versions of this mod is the method of kidnapping them. You used to have to smack them over the head with a crowbar before throwing them nimbly over your shoulder. Presumably, this is too violent for these politically-correct times and you are now expected to render them unconscious with a briefcase. Although, what on earth a heavily armed nutter is doing carrying a briefcase around seems to have escaped the developers' notice. In essence, *S&I* is a clever twist on the Capture The Flag style of game, with the hapless scientists replacing the flags and their hard work ensuring that you have a steady supply of new weapons to play with. These weapons are the usual *Half-Life* choice so include the MP5 machine gun, crossbow and gluon gun among others. Also included is the .357 magnum pistol with its useless zoom/sniper facility. As in previous versions of *S&I*, you can join the Amalgamated Fluorodynamics (green) or the Midland Carbide (blue) team before wandering off to join in the kidnapping antics. The more scientists you grab, the faster your new weapons will be developed and the quicker your team wins. The maps are all good and accurately continue the distinctive *Half-Life* atmosphere. Laboratories, corridors, drains and the rest all look great while having the right dose of foreboding about them. A top class update to a long-term favourite mod.

MOD OF THE MONTH

In these stifling politically-correct times, the terrorist-style violence in *Half-Life* is refreshing.

Every skilled nutter knows a briefcase can be used as an effective assault weapon.
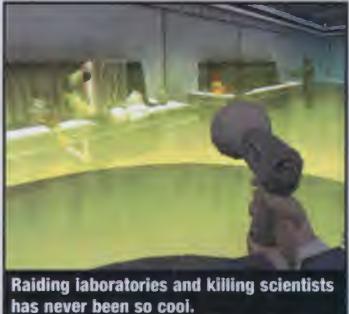
Raiding laboratories and killing scientists has never been so cool.

The men from the ministry are as creepy as you'd expect.

The graphics and atmosphere is stunning.

All the laboratories and corridors look great while retaining a sense of foreboding.

Sure to be an Oliver Stone production.

WFA gives you lots of health & armour fixes.

Four-way CTF map makes for frantic action.

A disembodied hand with a whisky bottle.

FLF soldiers wait for action.

WFA maps are very original in design.

Q3F medic about to meet his maker.

A dancing pirate skeleton, yesterday.

FRONT LINE FORCE V1.0

For: Half-Life
Website: www.planethalflife.com/frontline
Rating: OOOO O

While the rest of the *Half-Life* crowd have been busy spending their time blacking their faces and squeezing into their balaclavas for bouts of online killing at *Counter-Strike* (try our *Counter-Strike* servers if you haven't already), the *Front Line Force* team locked themselves away in a darkened room with only their PCs, plenty of pizzas and a selection of automatic weapons for company. Having decided that shooting each other would be both very messy and essentially unproductive (after the initial thrill had worn off), they sat down and decided to build their own version of *Counter-Strike* – and very good it is too.

CS clones for other games have it easy in some ways because the likes of *Q3* and *UT* look and play differently to *Half-Life*, but trying to create your own version of a mod as huge as *Counter-Strike* in its own "home" game has to be a very brave move. You are, after all, always going to be compared to the original version.

In this regard, *Front Line Force* can hold its head up high – it's pretty convincing in its own right. In fact, if the *Front Line Force* team had got there first, then it's quite possible that we would now be reviewing *Counter-Strike* as a *Front Line Force* clone.

The maps are well designed, the weapon choices are incredibly comprehensive and easily made, and the whole mod has a very 'together' feel about it. It is lacking in the range of maps available and it does need some more online support, but, hopefully, both of these things will, eventually, happen with time.

In fact, if you enjoy *Counter-Strike* but you get fed up with waiting for a spot on a server, you really ought to try this mod instead – you might even find yourself hooked…

WEAPONS FACTORY ARENA V2.1

For: Quake III Point Release 1.17
Website:
www.captured.com/weaponsfactory
Rating: OOO OO

Weapons Factory Arena is, essentially, a *Team Fortress* semi-clone for *Quake III* (point release 1.17 only), and it's not a bad effort either. The original *Weapons Factory* mod was a *Quake II* outing and as soon as the spunkier capabilities of *Quake III* appeared, the team set about updating the mod for the new game. If you know *Team Fortress Classic* for *Half-Life*, there isn't much need for a description, but in case the idea is unfamiliar, here's a run-down.

WFA is a class-based mod. Rather than being tied to one player type with a wide range of available weaponry, players select a specific class of fighter they want to be, and that class has its own fixed set of skills, weapons, amount of armour and so on.

WFA offers ten classes ranging from the Sniper who specialises in long-range killing and is, therefore, poorly armoured, to the Gunner who gets to carry around a whopping great big gatling gun affair that spits out bullets at a frightening rate. Due to his firepower and tendency to be in the thick of fighting, he's heavily armoured and slow moving – which, naturally enough, makes him a target for enemy snipers.

In between are the rest of the team – the fast-moving Recon, stealthy assassin, rocket-firing marine and the medic whose job it is to keep everyone healthy. There is a wide range of weapons available and these range from the usual pistol, shotgun and grenade to laser rifles, proximity grenades and a freeze gun.

As usual, the objective is to help your team capture enemy flags or command points while protecting your own, and *WFA* lends itself very nicely to this style of play. There's not much between this and similar *QIII* mod *Quake III Fortress* in terms of appearance and gameplay, so it all boils down to personal taste. Give it a whirl and make your own mind up.

QUAKE III FORTRESS BETA 1G

For: Quake III Arena , Point Release 1.17
Website: www.q3f.com
Rating: OOOOO

Another *Team Fortress* lookalike for *Quake III* and oh what a beauty. This really is what it's all about – from the weapons to the classes, everything is accurately reproduced… and more besides. As with any *TFC* themed mod, you get a range of player classes to choose from, including the medic, engineer, soldier and spy and each has his own specific weapons, strengths and weaknesses. Some have more firepower and armour (and hence are slow moving so are more suited to defensive play), while others can move quickly but carry little in the way of weaponry or protection. The latter are the "flag grabbers" whose speed is their only protection.

Quake III Fortress matches its inspiration, *TFC* , in terms of both classes and weapons – there isn't anything new there – but does some things better than others. The sentry guns, for example, are frightening looking multi-barrel jobs and the angry chatter of the Heavy Weapons Guy equivalent's personal chain gun has to be heard to be believed (it really does sound that good), but the sniper rifle is marred by an aiming spot that, when it appears in a targeted area, seems to be the size of a dinner plate, warning everyone to get out of the way quick. Maybe that's the idea – to make sniping more difficult – but it looks pants and you shouldn't be hanging around for long enough to get shot anyway.

On the map front, *Q3F* has some nice ones which blend tortuous corridors, dingy corners, exposed open spaces and some impressive architecture. The four-team Capture The Flag variant with one central courtyard leads to a huge gorefest in the middle as the teams just can't help but keep meeting there! If you've got *Quake III Arena*, then this mod is well worth the downloading time, and you can even get a nifty updater program to do it all for you.

ARG! BETA 5.0

For: Half-Life
Website: www.planethalflife.com/arg
Rating: OO OOO

Leading the way with hearty cries of "Shiver me timbers!" and "Roger the cabin boy!", *ARG!* is an amusing mix of first-person shooter meets *Captain Pugwash* meets the *Blue Peter* landscape design team. To describe the map as simple would be like saying that Westlife are mildly popular, although at least Ronan Keating's bunch of protégés could claim somewhat more in the way of lasting appeal… well, to teenage girls anyway.

This is not to say the mod isn't fun – it is – but alongside some of the other efforts here, it simply isn't in the same class in terms of both the appearance and the gameplay. Where *ARG!* does score well, however, is on the originality front. With a range of weapons including whisky bottles, exploding coconuts, a penny whistle and what could possibly be the biggest cannon in the history of naval warfare, the fun element is definitely there and this makes up for the fact that the skins for the game must only use a fraction of the number of polygons of most other mods, and the map is so uncluttered with anything of interest as to be almost dull.

In one map, for example, if one team could scale the cliffs while the other fought back from the pirate ship in the bay, then the long-range battle could take many hours to settle. And how would you get up the cliffs? Why, you'd use the fishing rod hidden in the underwater tunnel to lift yourself up with, of course. What else?

And if you're wondering why a mod which, this time around, only gets two stars is included in with this exalted company, the answer is that it's simply fun, original, and slightly mad. There's also an update on its way soon and the team says it's "much better". We'll be watching out for that one…

GAMING WEBSITES

SOFTWARE ROUND UP

Fancy a fight? There are a number of websites designed to get you into battle with the minimum of fuss. *Phil Wand* goes browsing for a bruising

Playing a computer game doesn't have to mean opening your CD-ROM drive, plugging away at a couple of missions, and then going downstairs to watch *Eastenders*.

Thanks to the Internet, you can now fire up your dial up and go play online against people from all over the world. Americans, French, Germans – seek and destroy all your enemies any time of the day.

Gaming websites are here to help you do that: they list the games, show the players, and help you get into the right arena with the minimum of fuss. Read on to find out how.

REVIEWS

KALI www.kali.net

Kali runs all the titles you know and love, connecting you to like-minded players from all over the globe. The downside is that the client software you need to hook up comes with a US$20 price tag, but cough up and you do get unlimited free upgrades and 30 days free technical support. The Kali Network also features numerous competitions and ladders, helping boost that all important community feel.

Typical Games: *Half-Life, Quake II, Quake III Arena, Unreal Tournament, Age Of Empires, Duke Nukem 3D, Descent 1 & 2, Baldur's Gate, Red Alert, Diablo*
Pros: Tried and tested • Friendly feel • Simple, effective client
Cons: You'll balk at the price • Bias towards older titles like *StarCraft* and *WarCraft*
Cost: US$20

HEAT www.heat.net

Visit the HEAT site and you'll feel rather invigorated. Not only is this service free, playing games means you earn something called degrees – these give you discounts in affiliated online stores. The software pack includes everything to get you online with other HEAT gamers, and includes a tracker to keep an eye on where your friends are, and an honours list to show who's been kicking the most arse.

Typical Games: *10Six, Kingpin ,Quake, Quake II, Unreal Tournament, Duke Nukem 3D, Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness, Sin, Age Of Empires*
Pros: Free • Feature-packed client • 10Six • Shockwave game area
Cons: European server not working • Web site is oh so slow
Cost: Free

MSN GAMING ZONE

zone.msn.co.uk

The front page of the MSN Gaming Zone is so stuffed full of game titles that you really don't know where to click next. Many are free to play online, some are premium games that require payment before you play, others you host yourself. Tracking down people is no problem -

there are hundreds online at any given moment – and many of the competitions and tournaments offer cash prizes.
Typical Games: *Age Of Empires, Rogue Spear, Rainbow Six, MechWarrior III, Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II, Quake II, MechWarrior 4: Vengeance*
Pros: Backed by Microsoft • Cash prizes • Cool selection of single-player titles
Cons: Backed by Microsoft • Daunting at first • Pings a bit iffy
Cost: Free

WIREPLAY

www.wireplay.co.uk

Wireplay, Gameplay... it's probably the same thing to you, and no matter. All you need to know is that you can go and download the free Wireplay browser software and plug away at all the top games with little or no effort. The community feel is second to none, helped no end by a number of high-profile tournaments and leagues.

Typical Games: *Counter-Strike, Descent 2, Descent, Doom, Duke Nukem 3D, Half Life, TFC, Kingpin, Quake II, Quake III Arena, Quakeworld, Unreal Tournament*
Pros: Fantastic website • Top client • Focus on the best games
Cons: Gameplay namedropping • Wireplay browser a bit clunky
Cost: Free

GAMES-WORLD

www.games-world.net

Set up by a group of gamers fed up with laggy connections, Games-World offers some of the smoothest shooting around. There's no client software to install: instead, sign up for the Games-World dial-up and go hunting for GW servers using a tool such as PingTool or GameSpy. Connection times are second to none, and of course you can jump onto the *ZONE* servers and go head to head with us lot.

Typical Games: *Half-Life, Team Fortress Classic, Unreal Tournament, Quake III Arena, Unreal, Kingpin, Tribes, Aliens Vs Predator Gold Edition, Soldier Of Fortune*
Pros: No nonsense website • Community feel • Technical support
Cons: The phone bill
Cost: Free

GADGETS

An intriguing round-up of all the latest hardware, good and bad, together with five of the best new movie releases on DVD...

POOL SHARK

⊛ £29.99 • Spectrum.com • 01925 766 330 • www.spectrumdotcom.com

Pool, as everyone knows, is the game of the Gods. Best played down the pub after a few jars, it's also been translated onto the PC in various guises, the best of which is *Virtual Pool 3*, see page 62 of this issue for our review. No matter how accurate the translation though, PC pool has always been missing the authentic cueing action.

And that's where you just know we're going to say… until now. The Pool Shark is a weirdly-shaped mouse that sports a roller-bar at the top that you can use for virtual cueing. It's USB and you don't need to install any drivers, which helps, and it comes bundled with *Virtual Pool 2* (still a top game) and a three-piece cue for those of you not flash enough to own your own stick. Admittedly, the squat bit of black plastic wouldn't get you anywhere down the Hat & Feathers, but it does an admirable job sliding up and down on top of the mouse. Undeniably a novelty item (you're never going to use this as a traditional mouse despite the fact that it works), the strangest thing about this bit of kit is that it actually works, and if yours is one of the photos that's displayed behind every bar in the land, this might be the closest you're going to get to the real thing.
✪✪✪✪✪

⊘ An innocent exterior hides 6Gb of digital music.

⊘ No really, it works.

JUKEBOX DAP

⊛ £349 • Creative Labs • www.europe.creative.com

MP3 files are still the toast of amateur pirates the world over and despite an ongoing court battle across the pond, Napster is still going strong. The Jukebox DAP (Digital Audio Player) stores up to an amazing 6Gb of data in MP3 and WAV formats, which provides the space for more than 100 hours of continuous music (or almost 10 transatlantic flights worth).

Cunningly shaped like a Discman, the build quality is superb and it can withstand a hefty crack without damaging the delicate internal hard disk mechanism. The anti-shock memory also means that you could feasibly go jogging with it, as long as you're fit enough to carry the extra weight – at 14oz it's nowhere near as light as a MiniDisc, and it's too big to fit inside your trouser pocket.

Thankfully, Creative has also got the software side sorted. It's quick and easy to get tracks across from your PC, and the sound quality is surprisingly good, either through headphones or hooked up to your hi-fi. All-in-all, this is the best way to carry your entire CD collection around with you, although as per usual, rechargeable battery life means you'll only be able to listen to a couple before heading down the newsagents. ✪✪✪✪✪

DVDS

YOJIMBO
⊛ £19.99 • PG • BFi

More famous for being remade by Sergio Leone as *A Fist Full of Dollars* – and more recently as *Last Man Standing* with Bruce Willis – Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* is a classic film in its own right. An unwashed ambling samurai, played by the great Toshiro Mifune, throws a branch in the air to decide which direction to go in and ends up in a ghost town where gambling and the battle between two rival gangs have split the community apart. Playing both factions against each other and showing some impressive moves, Mifune is clearly the blueprint for Clint Eastwood's cheroot-chewing stranger. Masaru Satu's music is a fantastic eclectic mix of percussive Japanese sounds and jazzy '60s beats that permeates the film with its own dark sense of humour. While inspiring a new generation of spaghetti westerns, Kurosawa's debt to earlier westerns is quite obvious. More startling is how clear the influence on *Star Wars* is. Check it out yourself.
DVD EXTRAS Enlightening commentary by film historian Philip Kemp
✪✪✪✪✪

DVD OF THE MONTH

GLADIATOR (2 DISC SET)
£24.99 • Cert 15 • Universal Studios

Ridley Scott certainly knows how to make a good epic. It's easy to get lost in the sheer scale of *Gladiator* and ignore its superb juxtaposition of brainless Hollywood action at its best and camp Jacobean tragedy. It would probably have been less easily dismissed if it had been set on an alien planet, rather than a historical period by so-called knowledgeable audiences, unaware that the audience watching the film is not that different from the people crowding the Coliseum. Russell Crowe is brilliant as Maximus, the Roman general who falls into slavery and who is part Hamlet, part Henry V and part Rambo. Make no mistake, he's here to entertain you.
DVD EXTRAS Second DVD has a Making Of feature • A documentary on gladiators • Deleted scenes • Conceptual art • A deleted footage montage and much more
✪✪✪✪✪

⊕ Play PC DVDs on your TV.

TINYWAVE 2001

⊗ £116.33 • Tiny • 0800 783 4575 • www.tiny.com

There's nothing more annoying than getting all excited over the latest DVD movie releases only to suddenly remember that you don't have £200 quid spare for a DVD player. It's not a total loss, of course, if you have a PC with a DVD-ROM drive. But how many people have their PC in the same room as their main TV, or want to indulge the couch potato traditions of beer and popcorn in front of a coughing and wheezing PC?

Hence the Tiny Wave, a transmitter that plugs into the back of the your VGA card and beams lovely DVD signals to a receiver box that hooks up to your TV's Scart connector. It works through walls, floors or whatever to a range of 50ft, and it doesn't just do DVD – it'll transmit MP3 and CD audio to your hi-fi as well.

OK, it's a bit of a Heath Robinson solution because you still have to shift your couch potato backside every time you want to start, stop or pause a movie (maybe some kind of cunning works-through-walls remote would be nice). However, the quality is quite acceptable and as a quick, dirty and cheap way to get your DVD drive doing something useful for a change, the TinyWave deserves a big pat on the back. ⊗⊗⊗⊗⊙

⊕ Timing isn't everything on the this watch.

The coolest MP3 player bar none.

WRIST AUDIO PLAYER

⊗ £279.99 • Casio • 0870 241 4289

While most 'combo' gadgets (mouse phone, watch camera) are about as useful as confection-based cutlery, Casio's new 'watch that thinks it's an MP3 player' is at least good at doing one function without the other impeding performance. In this case it tells the time rather well. But for £280 quid, what you'd really want it for is to play music into your brain, which is does do OK. Playback performance is perfectly acceptable, the watch itself is easy to use and looks quite nice. Unfortunately with only the standard 32Mb on board, it's a shame you can't upgrade it. You can fit about one hour of near-CD quality music into the memory you do have, which without recharging the batteries, you can listen to for four hours. Higher-quality MP3s however are a major problem (ie, they won't work) plus actually transferring music from PC to watch is also a pain thanks to poor bundled software. Like most such things, Casio's Wrist Audio Player is simply an expensive gadget. It may be the best at what it does, but there are better watches and far more impressive MP3 players around, both of which you could get for a lot cheaper. If you've got money to burn, get the Creative Jukebox DAP and glue a pencil to the top – viola, a sundial! ⊗⊗⊗⊙⊙

RIO 600

⊗ £169 • SonicBlue • 01189 444 400 • www.riohome.com

The third MP3 player we've reviewed so far, the Rio 600 is the smallest, the best looking and also packs a pretty decent punch. It comes with an on/off switch, a small backlit screen, that tells you exactly how long your battery's going to last (the one walkman battery lasts an impressive 11 hours), and a superb interface that makes playing and switching through your tracks extremely easy. We hit a couple of problems. Firstly, 32Mb of memory isn't enough and it only enables you to capture up to an hour of music. You can get an extra 32Mb backpack (this will cost an extra £99), but it's still pretty weedy compared to Creative's mighty Jukebox. Secondly, the headphones are almost impossible to get on. Out of the entire ZONE team, only Mark Hill could snap them on without spending ten minutes looking like a tit. Either we've all got funny-shaped ears, or Mark has. A small point, but crucial if you're on the train. Admittedly, once on, the ear pieces snap in firmly delivering maximum bass to the root of the eardrum, but we're not convinced. Ultimately though, if you're a style slave then the Rio 600 is the epitome of cool and well worth splashing out on. ⊗⊗⊗⊗⊙

BREAKFAST AT TIFFANYS

⊗ £19.99 • PG • Paramount

Anyone's who's read the Truman Capote's novella can imagine just how much charm the story of a broke author who prostitutes himself to finance his writing and who falls in love with his party girl neighbour ready to marry anyone for money has. Audrey Hepburn as the lightheaded Holly Golightly is timelessly divine and the dialogue is always sharp enough to fill in any gaps in the plot. It also features an incredibly unfunny Mickey Rooney as an irate Japanese neighbour, throwing in enough cheap slapstick to remind us that this is the same Blake Edwards who brought us the Pink Panther series. This is one of the truly great romantic comedies of all time, and is quirky enough to spit in the eye of most conventional syrupy Hollywood romances. All that is missing is George Peppard saying, after the obligatory happy ending, "I love it when a plan comes together."

DVD EXTRAS A measly theatrical trailer

⊙⊙⊙⊙⊙

A BRIDGE TOO FAR

⊗ £19.99 • Cert 15 • MGM

Based on Cornelius Ryan's excellent historical account of the 1944 Arnhem landings, war films don't get more epic than this 1977 classic. Directed by Richard Attenborough and starring, among others, Sean Connery, Edward Fox, Anthony Hopkins, Larry Oliver, plus a few well-known Americans. Apart from the impressive array of WWII hardware on show the film successfully highlights the gaffes, in-fighting, bravery and pure luck that stopped the whole operation from becoming an utter disaster – which it very nearly was.

Although nowhere near as impressive as in it's first half-hour as Saving Private Ryan, A Bridge Too Far never descends into schmaltz, though to be fair they are totally different films. A Bridge Too Far sits proudly behind The Longest Day as one of the finest War films ever made.

EXTRA FEATURES Theatrical trailer

⊙⊙⊙⊙⊙
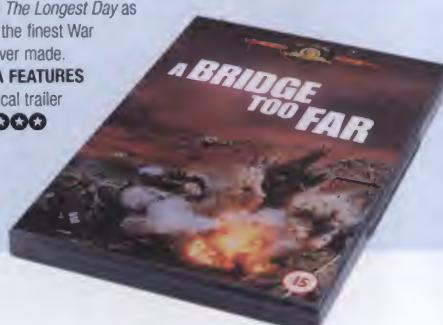
TOY STORY 2

⊗ £19.99 • Cert U • Disney

Rarely is a sequel better than it's predessesor (unless it's a game) and even more rarely is a Disney film worth watching. In this case it has overturned two probabilities. Not only is Toy Story 2 better than the original film, it's without doubt Disney's best film since Jungle Book (Freaky Friday notwithstanding).

Again produced by the ground-breaking Pixar Studios, Toy Story 2 sees the once annoying Woody (voiced by Tom Hanks) become likeable, as he finds himself kidnapped by a toy collector as the rest of the gang try to rescue him back. Once again Buzz Lightyear (Tim Allen), confronted by hundreds of clones, gets all the best lines and with some new characters and superb set pieces the film becomes better every time you watch.

EXTRA FEATURES Outtakes • Monsters preview • Featurette • Music video • Luxo Junior short film

⊙⊙⊙⊙⊙

SHRINK WRAPPED

Why do we play games? How do we play games? Does it matter? *Adam Phillips* is the one asking the ones asking the questions

> ❝We want to find out why people play games, what makes a good game, how they choose to play a game and how games fit into their lives❞

t's a strange sight. The Newmarket racecourse is best known for horses, haute couture and fat, middle-aged women with ridiculous hats sipping Pimm's. On this frosty night though, it's the location of i6, a weekend-long event dedicated to the art of gaming. The event's two main halls are teeming with gamers who have travelled the length and breadth of the country with their beloved PCs to take on like-minded folk. Row upon row of top notch PCs sit on long tables that stretch over each hall with hundreds of gamers shooting seven shades out of each other across a huge network.

Inconspicuously sitting among this weird and wired sight is Dr Jason Rutter, a sociologist, and Dr Jo Bryce, a psychologist, who've tagged along with Gameplay to the event. They're here to study the evening and, more importantly, the gamers, as part of their ongoing research into the world of gaming. *PC ZONE* was hoping that they would be 40-something spods with clipboards and pens, ready to have the piss taken out of them by us for all the hysterical headlines that their ilk have initiated in the press through their panic-inducing research.

Unfortunately, they are as keen about games as we are. And their ambition to get to the heart of gaming is seemingly genuine, and not scare-mongering. While their research is still in its initial stages, *PC ZONE* wanted to probe their brains about their views and findings to date, so we moved upstairs and found a quiet room without someone curled up in a sleeping bag, getting some kip before the long night ahead...

THE MISSION

Two qualified professionals. At a racecourse. Studying gaming habits? Why exactly?

Jason: There is this view of what computer gaming is and it usually involves boys, computers and bedrooms. But there is more to it than that. The gaming industry is worth more in exports than the film industry but it doesn't get the same input from the government. The film industry has a trade deficit of more than £300 million a year, whereas the gaming industry actually shows profit. We were incredibly impressed with computer games because everyone is touched by computer gaming. The actual diversity of who play games and what gaming means to them is actually a lot more interesting than the stereotype of spotty 15-year-olds playing *Half-Life* in their bedrooms!

Jo: Also, for every study heralded in the press as showing that computer games make people more aggressive, there are lots of non-significant results that never get picked up on by the media. We think it's time to go in without a positive or negative

Warp core breach in 3... 2... 1...

Drink of the Gods

ANOTHER LAN PARTY - ORGANISED BY Multiplay UK www.multiplay.co.uk
'Q50' takes one of the top prizes for his expertise on *Quake III Arena*.
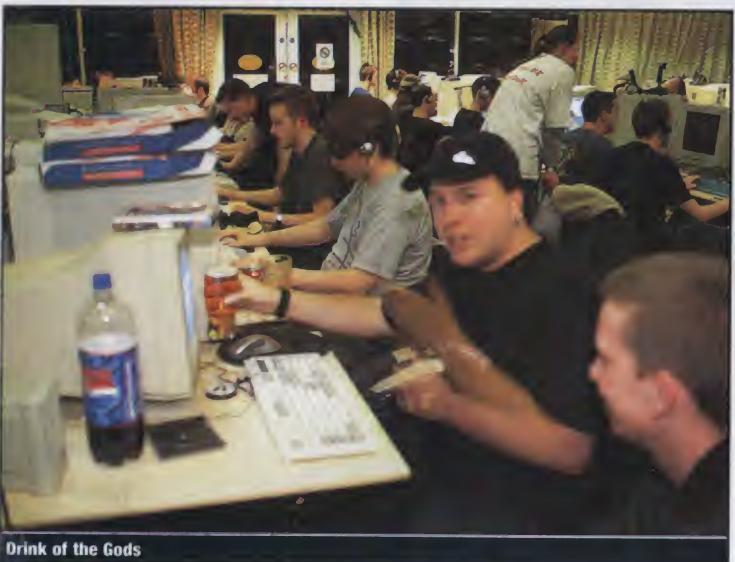
view and just find out what this is all about first – before we start looking at potential consequences.

Jason: We want to find out why people play games, what makes a good game, how they choose to play a game, and how games fit into their lives.

THE INITIAL FINDINGS

You are only in the initial stage of your research, but what are some of the findings you have uncovered so far?

Jason: There are all these arguments about gaming being a sport and it's not just about the psychological experience of gaming – there's an immense level of sport-like qualities to the computer-gaming community – and community is incredibly important. It goes beyond just one person and their machine. It's not just a matter of gaming across a network as it is here today at i6 or across the Internet. It's all about the different sorts of communities that pop up in the workplace and the playground or round a magazine or a TV show because of games. Within these genuine communities, gamers trade

a lot of specialist information like sports men and women do. Thus, there are tactics involved, especially in group play – it's not a matter of just going into a game and shooting the hell out of everything else! It's about trading tactics: "If you sit back and wait, you can do this and that, and when that happens, you do this etc." There is also kudos and status associated with that – it's not just a matter of being a good player but becoming a *skilful* player as well, which is similar to sport.

Jo: Another finding is that the more important gaming is to a person, the more likely they are to have a similar state of mind to athletes, which fits into this idea that, if you are training and investing in it, you will reap the rewards from it.

THE I-6 EVENT

Fair enough, but what about a massive event like i6? Why come to Newmarket on a cold Friday night?

Jason: First of all, to find out what goes on. What I'm interested in is how people play their computer games, what goes on as the night progresses,

and how relationships are built up. We were sitting downstairs a while ago and obviously one of the players was playing against someone they didn't know. So they were shouting that person's nickname, trying to establish who that real person was. It's interesting because, in research that I have done in newsgroups, the idea that you go online to become anyone you want to be, ie a virtual identity, doesn't often hold water.

> **"You can't just say: "Oh it's computer games that make people violent." What about violence in the home? Many people witness violence between their parents or aimed at themselves"**
>
> DR JO BRYCE, PSYCHOLOGIST

What happens is that people are keen to present their real selves to people if they are going to stick round for any length of time. If this was just about computer games, this event wouldn't take place because people could just do it online. In fact, it would be cheaper for people to do it online so there must be a reason why they are coming here, why they are sleeping on floors and bringing all their equipment despite the rail network problems! It's obviously about more

than just playing computer games!

Jo: People may love living through their screens but, at the end of the day, they still like to get together with real people in the same room. That's a *very* important point to make because of all those people out there who like to talk about computer games and technology wrecking communities and interaction between people.

Jason: Yeah, events like i6 gives you a chance to have others see you excel.

That's important. This isn't based on how much you earn, your status or your age. A 15-year-old can easily be better at games than a 40-year-old who is making mountains of money.

THE SCAPEGOAT

It's bottom line time. The media and some parents believe that games are a bad influence, or even evil. Are computer games being blamed too much for society's ills?

Jason: Sure. With some parents, you

get: "My children play on computer games and they're OK, but that's because I am good parent. But there are a *lot* of bad parents out there!" It's like there is a fiend out there but no one is quite sure where or what it is! But ultimately, no one has actually proven that there *is* a fiend out there. It's like being alone in the dark and you can make out all sorts of shapes in the darkness. You want to turn the light on and find that it's just your coat hanging on a hook. If there is something there, we want to know what it is, but the fact is we don't know what it is at the moment!
Jo: Also, with some of the research that has been done, it's like: "We took children and got them to play a really violent game. We also got some other children who didn't and then we put them in a playground. According to our ratings, the children who played the violent game were more aggressive in the playground afterwards." But you're like: "So? What does that mean?" It's like these researchers are looking for these negative effects in the first place! And they have taken the issue of violent videogames and applied it to *all* gaming! Yeah, you have shoot 'em ups but you also have questing games, sim games and more – there is a whole variety of different games! That's something that the government doesn't see – they just think of a child locked into a screen shooting things to pieces!

THE MORAL MINORITY

So why are we subjected to so many moralising parents and so much sensationalist media coverage?
Jo: Moral panic arises when something is new, and because of problems to do with crime and delinquency, the government is

looking for simple answers to issues that are very complex. It says: "Oh, it must be that the kids are playing violent computer games!" There is still no real evidence that supports such theories completely, because you do get studies that find a link but you also get those that don't! OK, maybe playing violent games if you are a certain person can make you more violent, but what about witnessing violence in the home? Many more people witness violence between their parents. You can't just say "it's because of computer games".
Jason: The reason people play computer games is not because of the violence though. Compare the people here at i6 to people at a footy match, and I think you would find a different dynamic. At i6 there is mutual support between gamers. There are clans, but there isn't that kind of

tribalism that goes on with footy fans. Like any community, though, there will be violence within it, but to say 'computer games raise levels of aggression therefore computer games are bad' is a gross reduction.
Jo: The only thing I would say is that it's most likely not a good thing for

> ❝ **There's an immense level of sport-like qualities to the computer-gaming community – and community is incredibly important. It goes beyond one person and their machine** ❞
> **DR JASON RUTTER, SOCIOLOGIST**

very young children to play very violent games just like it isn't ideal for them to watch violent TV. Despite the evidence being inconclusive, you would err on the side of caution in such a situation. That's why ELSPA's age rating system is so useful.

THE PROGNOSIS

So, are games good or bad for you? *PC ZONE* crosses its fingers...
Jason: If computer games fit within

the balance of everything else you are doing then it's a great thing to do. What is unique to computer gaming is that it's far more of a level playing field for people to get into. If you decide to be a tobogganist for example, you've got to find money to do that and find a job that will allow you take six months off a year to do it! So it's not in the grasp of most people, whereas gaming is.
Jo: In the US, certain parties are dead against games because they believe that they teach people how to shoot and so on. But there is another side to it – if you've had a bad day at work, does it help to go home and play games? How stress-reducing is playing games? I would say that the benefits of computer gaming are the same as any other leisure activity. The only downside is that it's not like sport, in that you don't get the health benefits from running round the football field or whatever. Even so, anything you enjoy has to be beneficial for your psychological health, if not your physical health. PCZ

Idea for game: *Sim LAN Party*.

A VIEW FROM THE INSIDE

ON THE CD

They're certainly aiming their sights high. Jo and Jason could hopefully be the first researchers to offer a real glimpse into the psyche of the gaming world...

It's ambitious stuff. Jo and Jason want to look at all aspects of the games industry from its history and how the current business is structured right down to the individual gamer. And i6 isn't the only event they have been along to. Jo travelled to the UK PC Gaming Championships at the Playing Fields in London. "A student and I conducted a small pilot study and we compared the gamers that were in the final with athletes from a club in Manchester,. It basically showed that computer gaming was equal in psychology experience to athletics and other activities."

They've also been along to the UK Console Championships to collect questionnaire data as Jason explains: "We are building up a questionnaire now. What we want to do is get a strong base of computer game players, so for the first time we will have a full viewpoint on not just 'does gaming make gamers more violent?' but rather why do people play games? What makes a good game? How do they choose to play a game? And how does it fit in with their everyday lives?"

Jo and Jason's questionnaire endeavours to get inside the heads of gamers. It covers a wide array of topics from asking you about your feelings while playing games and your general state of mind over the last few weeks to asking you to describe what is important to you in any great gaming title.

As well as the CD, you can check out the questionnaire on our website (www.pczone.co.uk) and print or load the html page from our CD (PCZoneQ.html) and send in your thoughts to Jo and Jason. In the meantime, they're working on several other projects over the next year and hope to hold a conference for the games industry. "Ultimately, we want to form a bond between us and the industry," says Jason. "We think we have a lot to offer them."

"There is mutual support between gamers."

PCZONE#100

SPECIAL 100TH

THE HISTORY OF PCZONE

Editors, past and present, look back on the highs and lows of seven years of PC ZONE

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Hardware, games & more

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THE SEQUEL TO THE WORLD'S BEST EVER GAME

(Can you tell what it is yet?)

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Back by popular demand

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STARFLEET COMMAND II
WORMS WORLD PARTY
SEA DOGS
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WORLD EXCLUSIVE REVIEW
BLACK & WHITE
Could this be the game of the century?

Z: STEEL SOLDIERS
EXCLUSIVE
REVIEW & DEMO

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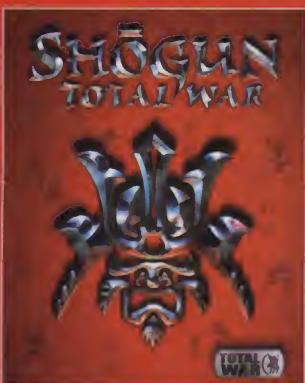
SHOGUN TOTAL WAR
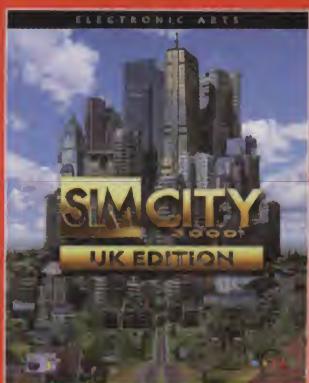
SIM CITY 3000
UK Edition

RAINBOW SIX COVERT OPS

STARSHIP TROOPERS
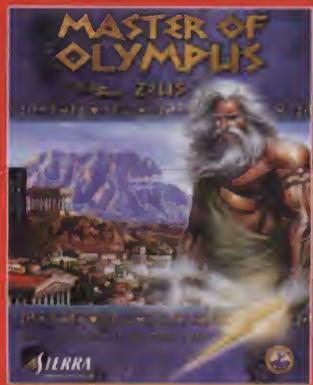
ZEUS MASTER OF OLYMPUS

HALF-LIFE GENERATION

SWAT 3 CLOSE QUARTERS BATTLE
Elite Edition
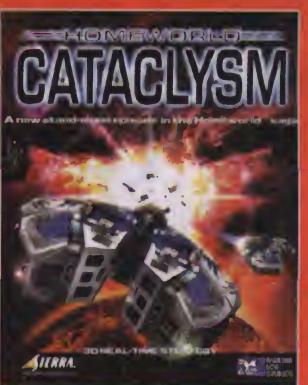
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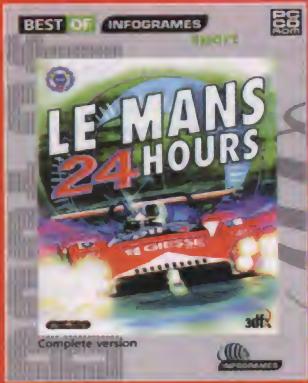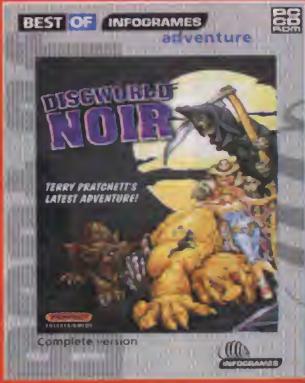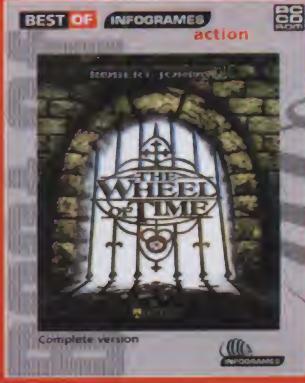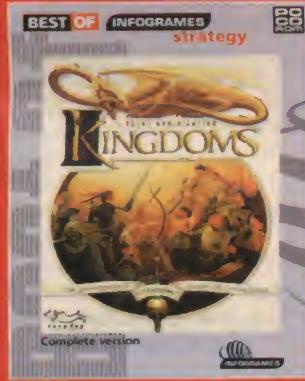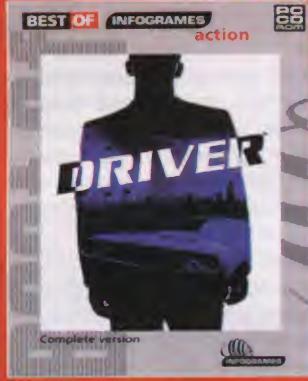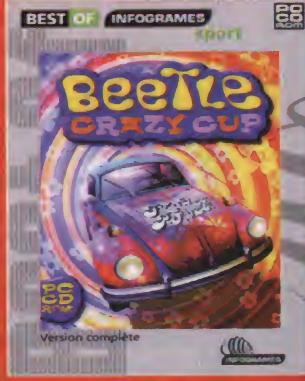
DON'T JUST SIT THERE...

Reading through this month's Watchdog took me back to a similar experience I had last year when I bought myself a PC. Late delivery, very unhelpful help line assistants and a faulty machine with a sound card, which wasn't just faulty, but not screwed in. All this added up to a thoroughly nightmarish experience. PCs aren't cheap, and shopping around is preferable to walking into a retail store and shelling out loads of cash on a machine which is probably already out of date. Don't be conned by a salesman's banter either. Chances are they know very little about PCs, and have learnt all they know on a half-day course on sales skills.

If you are unfortunate enough to have problems with the company you've bought a PC from, don't just sit there. Write to Watchdog, and we'll do our best to sort things out. Failing that, phone the Trading Standards Office. If you've payed by credit card and the company that's messed you around refuse to refund you, then you're within your rights to get your bank on the case as well. It's amazing how much more responsive they can be when there's a chance of them losing face. Just remember, it's people like us, who keep people like them in business.

IN TRUBS THIS MONTH...

YOUR HOSTS

Adam Phillips **Keith Pullin** **James Lyon**

CHEAT MASTER

Come on then you cheating scabs... let's get your monthly fix

✪ CHEATMEISTER Keith Pullen

NEED HELP?

If your problems persist, you can solve them if you...

WRITE TO Dear Keith/Cheat Master, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with **Dear Keith** or **Cheat Master** in the subject line.

COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 2
Electronic Arts
• If you want invincible demolition trucks (and let's face it, you'd be a fool not to) construct five or six of them and have a fully charged Iron Curtain ready. Drive the trucks into the enemy base and activate the Iron Curtain around them. The trucks will reach their target without being destroyed.
• When you're playing as the Soviets and you want to get a few soldiers into an enemy base without being spotted, use a Yuri to mind control a school bus. Now load your soldiers into the bus and the enemy will not attack it.

HITMAN: CODENAME 47
Eidos Interactive
OK, file edit time now, but don't worry – it's fairly straightforward. Open up your Hitman.ini file in the Hitman directory and add the line 'enableconsole 1'. Save the file, and then start the game as usual. During the game press the '~' key and then type in any of these deadly codes:

god 1	God mode
giveall	All weapons with

✪ "Watch it buddy."

	full ammo
infammo	Infinite ammo
invisible 1	Invisibility

DELTA FORCE: LAND WARRIOR
Novalogic
While playing the game, press '~', and then enter one of these codes exactly as they appear here:

kariya	Infinite ammo
roy	Invincibility
drury	Invisibility
NextWaypoint	Go straight to next waypoint
help	Help
showgun	First person gun view
1stPerson	First person view
domi	Artillery strike
talkblue	Dirty talk
Bozo	Bozo mode
VonBT	Break talker
magazine	Change magazine
talk	Chat
command	Command prompt
BigMap	Commander's map
dualcpu	Dual CPU mode
exit	Exit mission

flipmouse	Flip mouse direction
fly_up	Fly up
ShowFriendly	Friendly tags
hudcolor	HUD colour
huddetail	HUD detail
killlist	Kill list
1knife	Knife
8laser	Laser designator
NextFlag	Next flag
NVG	Night vision goggles
CoolNVG	Realistic night vision goggles
PrintScreen	Screenshot

METAL GEAR SOLID
Microsoft
We've already printed some cheats for this in issue 97. However, some more have come to our attention. So, just to remind you, start the game with the 'mgsi.exe –cheatenable' command line, and then press one of the following keys during the game:

F8 – F12 Toggle alternate graphics textures

In addition, there are some extra tricks that you might want to try:
• Follow Meryl into the women's toilets and open the door to the last cubicle in under five seconds to find and embarrass Meryl with her pants around her ankles.
• Look at Meryl through the scope or camera for some amusing photography time comments. Shake it baby...
• Successfully complete the following modes in this order: Training, Time Trial, Gun Shooting and Survival. When you've completed the final one, you're treated to a technical shooting display by the CPU.
• Go to area B2 of the tank hanger and walk to the end of the hallway to the right of the door where you

STUPID COMPETITION

Where cheating and pointlessness are qualities to be admired

So, you fancy yourself as a bit of a cheatmaster, do you? Well, here's your chance to prove it. For the next few months (and even longer if you're lucky), we're going to be running a Stupid Compo. All you have to do to enter is send us your most ridiculous and pointless cheats. If we think your cheat is stupid enough, we'll not only print it and your name, we'll also send you the most ridiculous prize we can find in the *PC ZONE* prize cupboard. What more incentive do you need?

Please send your cheats, with the title Stupid Compo, a brief description of what they (allegedly) do, along with your name and address, to letters@pczone.co.uk. Make sure to include all your correct details, so if you do win, we know where to send your prize. Congratulations to this month's winner, Andrew Chappell, whose crap cheat for *GTA2* makes pedestrians run around naked. To do this, type your name as GOURANGA then again as NEKKID. Your fantastic prize Andy, is a whole loo roll, to help you out with those New Year squits.

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fight Ocerot. Down here is a secret room that is entered by using C4 explosive. In the room is a level 4 security card and six doors. The camera can be found in the room behind the level 4 security door. You can now take photographs.
• Finally, here are all the Codec frequencies:

Campbell/Naomi	140.85
Mei Ling	140.96
Master	141.80
Otacon	141.12
Meryl	140.15
Nastasha	141.52
Deepthroat	140.48

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER
Fox Interactive
During the game, hit 't' and then dabble with these immortal codes:

mpimyourfather	God mode
mpwegotdeathstar	Infinite ammo
mpkingoftehmonstars	All items and weapons with infinite ammo
mpdrdentz	Health replenish
mpwonderbra	Maximum armour
mpyoulooklikeyouneedamonkey	Full armour options
mpgoattech	All weapon upgrades
mpracerboy	Spawn snowtruck
mpmaphole	Mission complete
mpasscam	Third person mode
mppos	Toggle position display
mpmiked	Exit game

ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS
Sierra
While zooming around the majestic Greek landscape, press 'Ctrl, Alt and C' simultaneously and then enter one of these codes exactly as they appear here:

Ambrosia	Scenario complete
Delian Treasury	Extra 1000 drachmae
Fireballs from Heaven	Fireball strike at selected location
Bowvine and Arrows	Cows targeted by towers
Cheese Puff	Stupid costumes

FIFA 2001
EA Sports
Here comes the usual selection of standard *FIFA* cheats – just enter them on the main menu and you'll be away…

Gimmethemoney	More money
Bigheads	Surprise, surprise; it's the big head mode
Playersmaybe	Free players

DEAR KEITH

Keith Pullin tackles more of your gaming conundrums

MONKEY HOUSE

Q I'm playing *Escape From Monkey Island*, but I've become stuck quite near the beginning. I've given the catapult guy the pretzels and I've made it into the mansion but I can't find the right document so that I can make it to Lucre Island. Where is this document? Please help because this is the first *Monkey Island* game I've ever played.
Finbar Scott, Coventry

A The document you need is just to the right of the stairs where the fine china is. Give it to Elaine to sign and then talk to her about the ship so that she gives you a gubernatorial symbol of authority. Now go and talk to Otis and Carla. Show them the signed cushy job document, and then head back to the harbour to show the harbour mistress the gubernatorial symbol of authority. You should now be able to travel to Lucre Island.

NO STAYING POWER

Q You may think I'm pathetic asking for help on this but it really is bothering me quite a lot. My problem lies with the latest edition of *Championship Manager*. I would like to know why, in virtually every single match my opponents either get a winning or equalising goal in the last minute of the game. Frankly, it's absolutely ridiculous, and I have no idea why this is happening. Is it a bug? Is there a patch to put it right? Or am I just really, really unlucky. I would appreciate your advice on this.
Len Kenward, Stoke-on-Trent

A Ah yes, the old classic. It's not a bug, and it's nothing particularly underhanded from the programmers. The reason why you're prone to conceding late goals is because your players' fitness or stamina is not up to scratch. The best way to overcome this is by either changing the training routine to improve their fitness, or by buying some solid players with good stamina and work rate. Alternatively, you could always try getting men behind the ball at the end of the match.

GIRL TROUBLE

Q I've got to the Tower Block on *Tomb Raider Chronicles* (level 13), but I'm now having serious problems getting anywhere. The first problem is the bloody staircase, which is totally destroyed and impossible to jump up. The second problem is that bloody huge robot thing at the top of the stairs who keeps targeting me with his laser and blowing me away. Just what the hell's going on? Please tell me how to get the stupid trout up the stairs because I've just about had enough. Thanks.
Bruce Bunker, Redbridge

A Sorry to hear about your girl trouble Bruce, but this is a difficult one to help you on. Jumping up the stairs over the damaged sections is a case of perfect timing. You literally need to get right to the edge and then jump from there. Shooting the robot's head with your zoom laser sight can solve your other problem. Can't really offer much more than that I'm afraid – good luck though, and for God's sake – calm down man…

BROTHERLY LOVE

Q My brother is stuck on the *Blair Witch Volume 1: Rustin Parr* demo. He has collected the notebook, matches, and docs bag and has been down in the basement and killed all the wolf-like monsters. What does he do next?
Mr Potty, email

A Your brother, eh? Of course. Well, *he* needs to work his way to the exit. Just get back on the main level of the house and keep heading right to the door. Watch out when you open the door though; zombies appear from nowhere, so stay on your toes.

SKATING ON THIN ICE

Q In *Tony Hawkes Pro Skater 2* I heard you can play as Spiderman. I'm a huge fan of the spidery dude, can you tell me how to become him please?
James Kane, Motherwell

A OK, pay attention though because this is quite a weird cheat… Pause the game, then hold 'Numpad 7' and press the spacebar 3 times followed by C, V, cursor up, cursor down, cursor left, cursor up, C, V, spacebar, V, B, spacebar, V, and B. If you do this properly the pause screen will shake. Finally, select the 'End Run' option from the pause menu. Spiderman will be unlocked, as will cheats, levels, FMV sequences, McSqueeb and Officer Dick. Hope that helps.

Time to take off some skin.

Obligatory student protestor needed. Applications to the KGB.

COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 2

James Lyon avoids the flak to bring you to a guide to the single-player missions in *RA2*

★ REVIEWED: *PCZ* #95 SCORE: 82%

It's not all 'destroy the base' so if you're stuck we've hopefully got the solution. Enjoy it while it lasts because it looks like it's the final 2D version to come from Westwood. And then we'll only have the *Army Men* series to look forward to in that genre. Oh dear.

SOVIET MISSIONS
Red Dawn
Train about 15 conscripts and head to the north. Mend the bridge to the west of the second small base to get your hands on four tanks. Go up and attack the Pentagon. Easy.

Hostile Shore
Capture the Allied refineries to get some cash. Construct a shipyard, build six or seven Subs and take them down south to sink all the Destroyers and the Allied shipyard. Build a lot of tanks and head down the left of the map. Destroy the construction yard (the barrels nearby make it easier) and they'll give up and shut down the base. Finish everything off and remember that the Chrono Miners count too.

Three subs near a shipyard. Yesterday.

Big Apple
Capture the three derricks in front of your base. Fortify the building down the slope. Use about four V3 Rocket Launchers to clear up any pillboxes on the way north. Mop up infantry with Tesla Troopers and tanks. Destroy the pillboxes around the base with V3s again while using everything else to destroy enemy structures. You can use some engineers to repair the skyscrapers around the base to give you a fortified advantage if you want.

Before you capture the battle lab, train ten Flak Troopers and place them nearby. Beef up your tank division then hold on tight until the timer runs down.

Home Front
There's two ways to do this, an easy way and a hard way. Guess which one we went for? Build up two or three Subs to guard the shore and about four Flak Cannons to defend the air. Now the sneaky bit: send about five conscripts and Tesla Troopers to the east to take over and guard the lighthouse at the end of the map. When the invasion starts an Allied MCV should attempt to set itself up close by. Blow it up before it can build anything or else you're going to have a lengthy battle on your hands. Your own base should be safe from attack if you've fortified the buildings nearby and left a few Tesla Troopers guarding it.

And this is what will happen if you leave it to its own devices.

City Of Lights
Go to the left and capture the derrick to get some cash. Travel around, fortifying the buildings near any enemies to give you an advantage. Keep some engineers nearby to repair them if they get damaged. It's best to go in by the middle entrance to the north and take out the tanks in the park before

moving in your Tesla Troopers to charge the Eiffel Tower.

⊕ It's, ha ha, a pitch invasion. Sigh, where's my Valium?

Sub-Divide

Start up your base and quickly send some troops off to the left to stem any landings. Take some conscripts over to the house on the small island to gain a bonus. For another cash bonus, take an amphibious transport along the bottom left until you reach land and you'll find a crate. Build up some minor defences, then concentrate on building Subs and a few Sea Scorpions. Deploy them near the housed island to take out the Koreans when the timer runs down. Keep the dreadnought reinforcements at a distance.

Defend your shipyard from any remaining ships while stocking up on Subs. Head to the west and then up the small channel in the middle. Use your Dreadnoughts to take out the Prism Towers. Then sub-rush the Allied fleets and the shipyards. And you don't even need to set foot in their base.

⊕ Stop as much of the fleet as you can from around this point.

Chrono Defense

You need to defend all four points of your base. Before you do, send a couple of Tesla Troopers to take out the propaganda van to the

west, then send some engineers over to the far east derricks to get some extra cash. Build three miners to harvest the north field, guarded by a few tanks and Troopers. Churn out some Flak Troopers and cannons around your battle lab. Hold out and build up a few heavy tanks, some Apocalypses and Terror Drones and position them next to the entrance (two of each should do the job) along with a whole bunch of Tesla Troopers. Build some Tesla Coils nearby and add others when you've got the money. A few dogs should sort out any spies as well. The attacks keep getting stronger but as long as you keep an even mix at each point, you'll be able to hold them off. Phew.

⊕ Destroy the van and, er, not the statue of course.

Desecration

Defend your base from Paratroopers as you build. Send a few tanks, backed up by four V3 Launchers and Tesla Troopers over the bridge. Take out the Prism Towers and the buildings with V3 Rocket Launchers. When you've taken out their units, send a few engineers over to capture what's left.

Build one plasma coil to the north-east. Keep a good supply of Terror Drones to help take out enemy infantry and mix with a few Apocalypse tanks. Money can be tight here so send a few units to destroy the memorials and make some cash when there's a lull in the fighting.

To penetrate the White House base, the best thing to do is to amass your forces up at the north-west and assault the left

wall. Enemy buildings can spring up pretty quickly, so take out the construction yard with Apocalypses first of all while using V3s on the war factory. Then just clear up the power plants to take the coils off line and destroy the barracks. Kill any remaining units and capture the White House.

⊕ "Dear Mom, went to see the Washington Monument. Got viciously slaughtered by soldiers. Wish you were here."

The Fox And The Hound

Kill the two guards in the base to the north with the IFV and mind control the engineers to take over the base. Take over another IFV, build an engineer and put him in one to turn it into a repair vehicle. Take the two up to the north-east base and blow up the pillboxes and guards, using the repair IFV to fix any damage. Send the rocket IFV down south to destroy the enemy IFV outside the east entrance. By now he should be at full strength. Get rid of the repair IFV and use the psychic commander to take over the sniper, who should then take out all the guards and dogs standing at the entrance. Build a spy and send him into the base. Position your IFV at the south wall and launch rockets at the power plants while your spy takes the power down. The two tanks should pose no problem if you're at full rank. Snipe the remaining infantry and send in a psychic commander to take over the President. A job well done.

HOME FRONT
Base. How low can you go. Not too far down, actually.

CHRONO DEFENSE
A tough biscuit and no mistake.

DESECRATION
And that's for the elections…
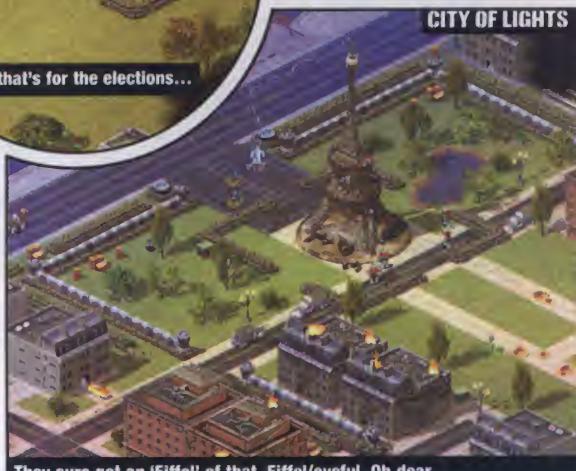
CITY OF LIGHTS
They sure got an 'Eiffel' of that. Eiffel/eyeful. Oh dear.

THE FOX AND THE HOUND

Use the Yuri units to take over these two structures.

WEATHERED ALLIANCE

Land all your forces here once you've cleared up. It's like *Saving Private Ryan*. Only, not.

RED REVOLUTION

Never knew what hit 'em.

RED REVOLUTION

Enough flak and they don't prove too much of a challenge.

Remember the Alamo? No? Just shoot everyone then.

Weathered Alliance

It can be a little hard getting started but guard the shores with Tesla Troopers and a few tanks while you build up. Build plenty of Flak Cannons and Troopers to protect from air attack. When your base is established build plenty of Subs, two or three Dreadnoughts and a couple of squid and take out enemy naval units near the coast. Use the Dreadnoughts to take out the beach defences and clear the area. When that's done, stick a load of Apocalypses, Tesla Troopers and V3s into amphibious transports and take them over. Use the V3s to take out Prism Towers and surge in with the rest to knock out the base. Build a silo while you're doing this so it's ready when you capture the battle lab. Defend it from any air attack while you wait for the countdown to finish and can nuke the weather control device.

How much are those units worth? About two squid (dear God).

Red Revolution

Bloody hard this one. The trick is to give yourself some breathing space at the start. As soon as possible, send an Apocalypse and two heavy tanks to the east until you reach a small valley. Take out the Patriot Missile launchers up the hill then head through and take out the other by the water. You can attempt to destroy the next one, but you'll probably die. Meanwhile, waypoint the two airships so they travel east then north towards the base and target them to take out the barracks, war factory, construction yard, psychic beacon and hopefully the nuclear plant before they're both shot down. That should make things a lot easier.

Back at the base, send some engineers to take over the derricks to the left and right. Build dogs and Terror Drones to help kill psychic commanders and some Apocalypse tanks to guard the front. Put Tesla Coils to the far left and far right and charge up with Tesla Troopers. Remember to build a service depot at the front to get rid of any enemy Terror Drones.

Before you build a nuclear silo, make about ten Flak Cannons and 15 Flak Tracks. Place the silo at the back of the base and use everything you can to take out the airships as they arrive. You'll need to launch two missiles, so prepare to spend about 20 minutes doing that before you can nuke the Kremlin.

Polar Storm

Build a barracks and train ten Tesla Troopers and ten Flak Troopers. Fight off any Chrono
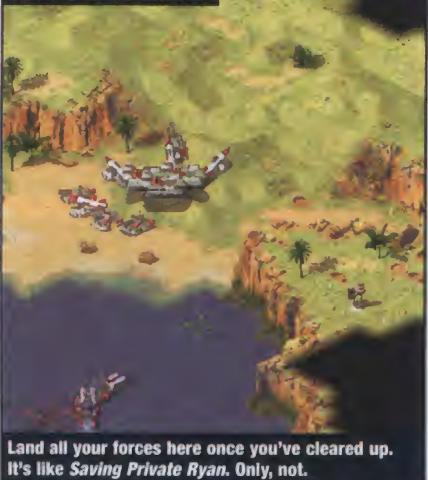
GENERAL HINTS

It's the same C&C gameplay as always. Which means it's always best to take out the enemy construction yard first, followed by the war factory and the barracks.

- Always build in bulk. One V3 Launcher might not destroy a Patriot Missile launcher but four certainly will.
- The same goes for Miners. One more makes all the difference to the funds.
- When grouping units, we found it best to group them in units of the same kind instead of mixing them. It's easier to remember which is which then. Make sure to get the 1.002 patch which allows you to centre your screen on that group by pushing their selected number twice.
- Always put a Tesla Trooper next to a Tesla coil in order to increase its efficiency.
- ParaTroopers are, and always will be, rubbish.
- The same goes for walls. They're time-consuming and fiddly and you can get through the whole game without building a single one.

invasions while you work. As soon as possible, lay some Flak Cannons and Troopers along the west side to stop any Rocketeers and Harriers from that direction.

Build a shipyard, make some Subs, Sea Scorpions and about three squid, then head west to destroy the Allied fleet and shipyard. Make three or four Dreadnoughts and make your way around the main coast clearing all the defences you can. Once that's done, churn out a load of Apocalypses, Terror Drones, Tesla Troopers and V3 Launchers and transport them over to the landing point. Make your way up and around taking out the power plants. To make things a little easier, send a few airships towards the north-west corner to uncover good places to nuke before they get shot down. If you get your Apocalypse tanks ranked up, they should have no hassle storming the base, backed up with whatever else you've got left at the time. When you reach the Chronosphere, blow it up and that's that.

⊕ Watch out for any chronojumps while you build up.

ALLIED MISSIONS
Lone Guardian
Use Tanya to sink the Dreadnoughts and head east and then north to the base. Train some GIs and an engineer to repair the bridge. Take them over to destroy the V3 Launchers and use Tanya to take out the buildings and infantry.

Eagle Dawn
Take Tanya north-west, swim across the lake in front of the base and take out the Flak Cannons and infantry. Use the Rocketeers to destroy the sentry guns.

To destroy the enemy base, it's easiest to go in the back way. Take Tanya and a few tanks down to the south-east corner and blow up the barrels to gain entry. Use the tanks to defend Tanya from any vehicles as she sticks explosives about the base. Take out the construction yard, war factory, and Flak Cannons so you can send in the air units and finish off.

⊕ Swim through the middle of that lake to get in the base.

Hail To The Chief
Fix the monument nearby to gain some cash. Build an airforce command and four Harriers to take out the small base just over the bridge. It's easy after that and there's plenty of cash around. So just make your way up to the north east with a whole bunch of

⊕ Beware. Zeppelins can fill you full of lead.
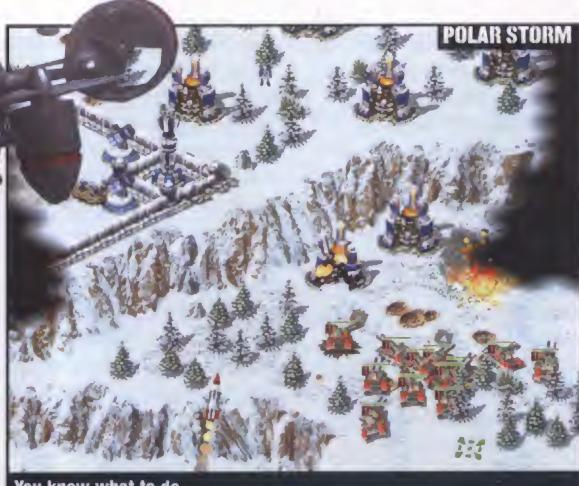
Rocketeers and tanks, enter the base on the right side and take out the defences around the psychic beacon before destroying it.

⊕ Get rid of the beacon to free the president from making mindless decisions. Well, maybe.
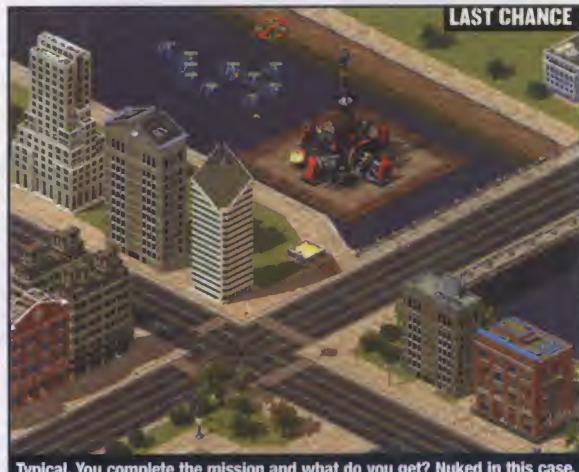
Last Chance
Another deceptively hard mission that's simple when you know how. After taking out the beach defences, build a base and make some cash. Then build Rocketeers, GIs and a few tanks and head up the north road to the bridge. Fortify the buildings and use the tanks to take care of Flak Tracks. Destroy the psychic amplifier with your Rocketeers and that's it.

Dark Night
Take Tanya and the spies up north. Use a spy to take a power

POLAR STORM
You know what to do.

LONE GUARDIAN
Shake it baby. Indeed.

LAST CHANCE
Typical. You complete the mission and what do you get? Nuked in this case.

plant and get Tanya to blow up the coils. Be careful to take any dogs out first, though. Get another spy in the battle lab to open up the map.

Up at the second base, use Tanya to shoot the barrels to the south and enter the hole in the wall to get to the silo. Head back to the south-west around the lake and up the slope to find some trapped units. Free them by blowing up the barrels, then take the tank to destroy the walls to the south-east of the silo. Take Tanya in to the right and blow it up.

↑ The units in the enclosure come in handy here.

Liberty
The enemy will come from both sides, but they'll be strongest on the right so concentrate most of your defences there. Fortify the buildings at the left as well, mind. Build up about three

↺ I'm a submarine, don't you know.

airforce commands with complete sets of Harriers. While you're doing that, take a few Rocketeers north up the river to destroy the two lonely refineries at the top of the map. The Soviets will start using Terror Drones, so build a service depot to help you. After all that, scout out the base over the bridge, then make kamikaze Harrier runs on the construction yard, and Tesla Coils. Take the ground units in to finish everything else off.

Stock up on units and head north east, keeping to the right of the map. Blow up the east wall near the power plants and send up a few spies in a Nighthawk to shut them down. Bring in the tanks to take out the Flak Cannons and Flak Tracks and let the Harriers and Rocketeers destroy the Soviet buildings from the air. Then just mop up.

Deep Sea
Build a few Prism Towers at the north-west edge of your base. Stick a few tanks nearby, and a few on the south beach just in case. Keep your shipyard guarded with Rocketeers while you build a fleet of destroyers and aircraft carriers. Sail over to the enemy island to the east and take out the Flak Cannons on the shores before sending in about eight Harriers to take out the construction yard. Then concentrate on all other defences

you can reach with your Destroyers before sending some transports on the north side. Train a few spies to shut down the coils (using some tanks to shoot any dogs) and destroy the war factory, barracks, and then everything else.

↑ Take the base out from the south east.

Free Gateway
Take Tanya south west along the freeway. Go left towards the beacon, take out the barrels and then destroy the remaining power plants. Don't take out any Tesla Coils but take out the remaining power plants instead before destroying the amplifier. After that it's just a straightforward base attack. Fortify nearby buildings, build some good defences and make a full assault on the enemy base.

↑ If you destroy the coils first, you'll leave enough power to charge the new ones.

Sun Temple
Swim your Seals down to the bottom of the map. Get on land and work your way up the right side of the base taking out whatever you can without drawing the attention of enemy vehicles. You should destroy

enough power plants to take the Tesla Coils off-line. Then go up north and release the prisoners. Fortify the huts for a while to help you defend from vehicles. Afterwards send everything you've got down into the base, using the Seals to blow up the buildings and infantry while the tanks and troops take care of vehicles and whatever's left.

↑ You could capture the bases if you want, but it's not really worth it.

Mirage
If you want some extra cash, send an engineer down to the bottom south-east to find a damaged refinery. Repair it and you'll get a free chrono miner in a crate nearby.

Take your other MCV and build defences near Einstein's lab. Keep on the defensive until you've got enough forces and go for the base to the east first. Finish that, then take the top two from the west. There's not that much ore around, so attacks should slow down after a while.

Fallout
Guard the bridge from attack. Protect the outside refinery with Rocketeers and destroyers. Dot some prism towers and prism tanks around. Once you've built the Chronosphere, train some spies and some Seals and take them over in a Nighthawk to the south east corner. Attack any dogs then send the spies in to shut down the plant. Get the Seals to take out as much of the

defences as they can (avoiding the miners) before they get killed. Send in destroyers to attack from the sea and transport some Prism and Mirage tanks to finish off the construction yard then everything else. Send more spies if you haven't got rid of all the coils.

Chrono Storm
Train GIs and fortify all the buildings aound about the base. Build up, but remember to keep structures well-spaced in the event of a nuclear attack. The less damaged, the better chance you'll have to fix it in time for the next one. Defend at first until you can make some Seal units. Take them over to the north entrance of the base to the right and get them to destroy the buildings, backed up by one or two tanks.

Send a few spies down the left side of the map with some more tanks and Seals. Shut down the power, destroy the coils and level what's left. Send your forces from there to the south. Build a set of Harriers and fly them in from that angle to take out the Flak Cannons and the nuclear reactors at the bottom. Send in Rocketeers to attack the coils and as many tanks as you can to take care of buildings. Work your way around. You should have built a weather control device by now, so take care of anything left in the middle, the nuclear reactors on the right side (finish them off with Harriers) and, finally, the Kremlin itself. ▧

↑ And this is what happens to your base. Keep the construction yard safe at least.

LIBERTY

Your base should look a little like this.

MIRAGE

A tank rush always works in times of trouble.

UNIT GUIDE

Meet the units, useful and otherwise, of the Allied and Soviet forces

ALLIED FORCES

Rocketeer
Even a lot of these can prove poor against flak weapons so use when there's none about. Great for clearing up Rhino Tanks, Tesla Coils and anything else frankly.

GI
Better than conscripts. Fortify any buildings around your bases with them.

Spy
Dogs can detect bad Sean Connery impersonations from quite a distance. Nothing else can harm them so use them as much as possible to infiltrate structures.

Attack Dogs
Rubbish most of the time, place with Terror Drones to attack spies and psychic commanders.

Chrono Legionnaire
Not really that good at all.

Grizzly Battle Tank
Weaker than the Soviet Heavy Tank, it's not worth making an assault with these without backup from plenty of other units.

IFV
It's a lot of bother filling them with infantry when the rockets do a decent job. Incredibly weak, though, so you probably won't build too many.

Harrier
Weak on its own, but eight of these should be enough to level any building, even with three or four Flak Cannons around it.

Mirage Tank
A good tank, though the disguise works better in multiplayer than single-player.

Nighthawk Transport
Since it avoids radar, it's easy to fill it with Seals or spies and take the long way round to an empty piece of land next to the enemy, leaving it hidden until you get a chance to deploy the units.

Prism Tank
The finest tank of the Allies. Always use it in groups, though.

Destroyer
Essential for getting rid of Subs. Once again, always travel in groups.

Aegis Cruiser
Bit useless, but keep one or two around the side of Destroyers to protect from Flak Troopers.

Aircraft Carrier
Slow, but strong and a good unit to keep at the back for offensives.

Dolphin
When it's not being put in cans of tuna, it'll be screeching at squids and Subs. And that's about it.

SOVIET FORCES

Conscript
Weaker than the GI, but still do an effective job since they're quick to turn out and make up for it in numbers.

Tesla Troopers
Since they can't be crushed by tanks, they make both an excellent front offensive and defensive unit. Building at least five at a time is a good idea.

Crazy Ivan
Not all that useful. It's best not to waste resources building many.

Flak Trooper
You must build a lot as soon as you begin your base. Good against Rocketeers.

Yuri
A nice touch but tricky to operate in a major battle. The worst thing you can do is to forget about enemy vehicles attacking you when you've changed their control to something else. Keep a distance between them before you do.

Rhino Heavy Tank
A step up from the Allies' Grizzly, it can hold its own in a fight but still needs the numbers for larger encounters.

Flak Tracks
Rather nippy and great against air targets. However, it's weak and poor as a transport so don't bother too much.

V3 Rocket Launcher
Slow and powerful. Group a few together to attack stationary base defences before the main attack.

Kirov Airship
This is the thing. One can last a hell of a long time. Even if your enemy sees them coming, chances are he won't have enough flak weapons built to deter you from serious damage.

Terror Drone
The fastest but weakest unit. Keep them behind the front line base guard. They can take out enemy infantry.

Apocalypse Assault Tank
The daddy of all tanks. Upgrade one of these and it's practically unstoppable.

Typhoon Attack Subs
The same as the Destroyer. Build lots.

Dreadnoughts
Used to attack any coastal defences from a distance. Can be guarded with a few Subs but usually far enough away not to be too concerned.

Sea Scorpions
Build one or two to travel with your other naval units and forget about them.

Giant Squid
If there are no dolphins around, one of the best underwater units. Combine with a couple of Subs and do your worst.

Aircraft carrier.

Prism tank.

Nighthawk transport.

Giant squid.

DEAR WANDY

Problems with Trojans, slow video performance, the joys of a Packard Bell PC, and emigrating to the USA. Is there no problem Wandy can't answer?

⭐ QUACK Phil Wand

You need eyes like Superman to play at 1,600 x 1,200.

COME IN, SIT DOWN

Send us a query or a top tip and you could pocket £50. Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us, and we, in turn, may share them with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in type of thing. And, as an extra incentive, if we think it's an amazing tip or interesting query, we'll offer you a cool £50. No, really. Send in as much relevant information as you can.

WRITE TO Dear Wandy, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL Address your letters to us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading **Dear Wandy**.

Please note: while we can assure you that we read *every* techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Also, please do not phone, as you're unlikely to reach someone who can help. Thanks.

CAN'T HACK IT

Q After having read your article on firewalls, I thought it would be nice to have some sort of extra security. I downloaded ZoneAlarm and within five minutes of firing it up, I could see that several programs on my PC were trying to use the Internet, for example kasgfasdg.exe. I wouldn't have any of that and looked into the problem, and it turns out I seem to have caught a nasty virus that multiplies each time I click on an application. My connection has been awful recently, and the removal of this virus seemed to be the cure.

It's only recently that I've noticed alerts within ZoneAlarm. I looked into some of the port numbers and, from the little I understood, there's a chance my computer is getting hacked. I checked some of the numbers against a database, and both 1243 and 27374 are linked with the SubSeven Trojan. I searched for different manifestations of the Trojan and the closest I found was icqmapi.dll that was about the same size. I deleted it and booted up ICQ. Great, no problems, that file must have been the offender.

Ten minutes later, checking through my alerts history, and port 1243 is again in use. The question is, why would someone want to hack my computer? I don't have a business and nothing of any real value on my machine. I don't have any information on hacking really and so I'm in at the deep end here.

Stephane

A The SubSeven Trojan does indeed default to port 27374 (older versions use 1243). Curiously enough, a friend recently emailed me an IP viewer for ICQ which contained the icpmapi.dll you mention. Being a suspicious fellow, I had a look at its accompanying README.TXT file, and at the bottom is the message: Special Greetings to the SubSeven Crew. That was enough for me to delete the files and never even try running them. Now, OK, it may be completely innocent, but these days it's simply not worth the risk. I would advise you to remove icqmapi.dll from the ZoneAlarm program list so that it will never be allowed to start up and act as a server, and remember to keep an eye out for anything else trying to act in the same way.

As for why they pick on you in particular, it's nothing personal. Once a SubSeven Trojan has tricked its way into your PC, all the hacker needs to use is a Trojan hunter program which scans a wide range of IPs looking for any Trojan programs that are 'alive' and accepting connections. When the hunter finds one, it tells you, and all you have to do is whip out your Trojan client and access the victim's computer. In simpler terms, the accesses you see within ZoneAlarm are automated, and it's wholly unlikely that you're being deliberately targeted.

In the past when I've used a BT account, I've noticed a massive increase in the number of connection attempts appearing in ZoneAlarm's alert window. If your experience is anything like mine, you'll find that nearly all the machines knocking on your door are close to your own address, indicating other BT users sniffing around close to home.

When all is said and done, as long as you have ZoneAlarm running, and don't allow any unknown programs to act as servers, you will be safe from Trojan attacks. Simply ignore the connection attempts because they're not getting anywhere. If you get bored, you could collect up your access logs and send them to abuse@btinternet.com

PIXEL POWER

Q I have just 'acquired' a 17in monitor capable of 1,600 x 1,280 resolution. However, my computer is now starting to slow up a bit because my poor old 12Mb Voodoo2 can't handle all those pixels. Seeing as my budget is a bit tight (like £80 kind of tight), I was wondering whether getting a better graphics card, such as an older style 32Mb Riva TNT2, would stretch out my gaming life for another year or so, or whether I should just sit it out and wait for the arrival of a new computer.

Ben Stinson

A Hell's bells, you must have eyes like Superman to handle 1600 x 1200 on a 17-inch screen. But back to the plot. One way of getting a better frame rate with your

> **"Hell's bells, you really must have eyes like Superman to be able to handle 1,600 x 1,200 resolution on a 17in screen"**

current setup would be to drop the resolution down. Mathematically, 1,600 x 1,280 has more than two and a half times the quantity of pixels of 1,024 x 768, and so requires more than two and a half times the computer power to display it all. Less resolution equals more frame rate.

Eighty quid will just about get you the new GeForce2 MX which, although having been aimed squarely at the budget market, is still an impressive little performer and is faster than the original GeForce 256.

Plus it's available on both PCI and AGP. The same money will buy you older cards such as the Voodoo3 2000 and 3000, and £60 gets you a TNT2.

As to which one, well, that's the thing. The Voodoo is a 'tried and tested' product, 3dfx having kicked off the graphics accelerator market all those years ago. However, I would go for the GeForce2 MX. Apart from the fact that it's got more electronic punch than its Voodoo rivals, the name alone will fill your friends with awe.

PACKARD HELL

Q I bought a Packard Bell PC about two years ago, and, until recently, have had no problems. That is, until I decided to upgrade my processor. Not being very 'in the know', I emailed Packard Bell direct and asked them what was the biggest processor I could fit to my existing board, and whether it was compatible with both AMD and Intel chips. Their reply pointed me to an online manual documenting the specifications of my machine.

The motherboard supports the following processors, in a Single Edge Contact (SEC) cartridge, placed in slot one: 1. Pentium II 233/66, 266/66, 300/66, 333/66 MHz including cache. 2. Intel Celeron 266/66 MHz processors. 4. Mendocino processor (depending on the revision).

I currently have an Intel Celeron 366MHz but, as you can see, my motherboard supposedly only supports a Celeron 266 and a Pentium II 333. If that's so, how can my Celeron 366 actually work?
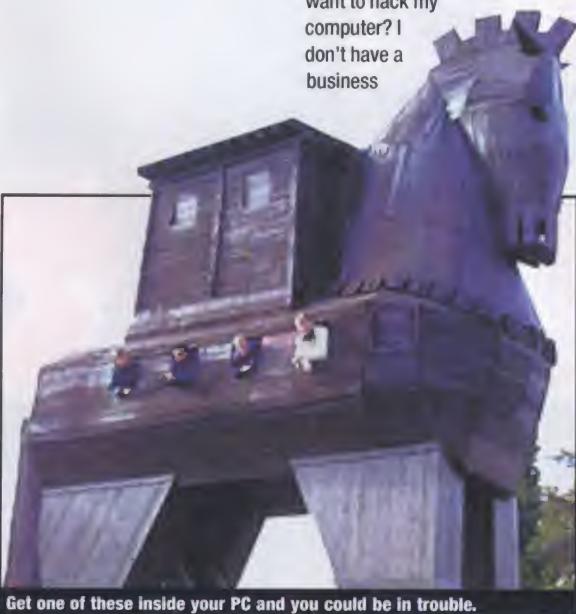
Get one of these inside your PC and you could be in trouble.
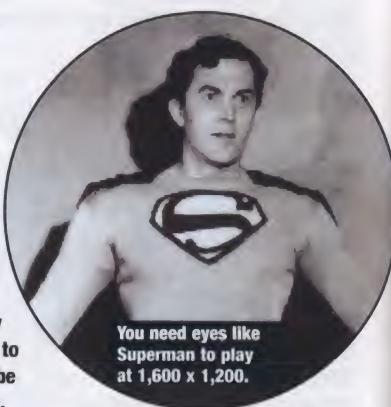
Are you able to tell me what processor I can use, as Packard Bell replied to my first email, but when I questioned them they never replied – five emails and counting now.

McCafferty

A You are suffering from outdated manual syndrome. At the time the manual was written, the biggest Celeron was a 266. As the Pentium II speeds climbed ever upwards, the Celeron started doing the same. The big difference is that the later PII chips were pumped up with a 100MHz bus, whereas the lesser Celerons kept the old 66MHz bus. In simpler terms, your motherboard is limited to a 66MHz front side bus (FSB) Intel processor, and its overall speed governed by a clock multiplier setting on the CPU. 266MHz is actually four times 66MHz (ie a multiplier of 4). Your 366MHz processor is actually the same basic 66MHz powerplant as in the 266MHz chip, but with a multiplier of 5.5.

If you want to update your CPU, you're going to have to stick with a 66MHz based Intel such as the Celeron, and you'll need to have a look on your motherboard for the multiplier links. To be honest, I'd be very surprised if it goes much higher than 5.5 – it may stretch to six, which will hoist you to 400MHz, but I'll eat my hat if you can squeeze any more. Then, of course, you've got to go and find yourself a Slot 1 Celeron 400MHz to put in it. And to be honest, that extra 34MHz is neither noticeable nor worth all the effort.

So I think you're pretty much painted in from all angles: you can't get anything worthwhile from your existing motherboard, and, to my knowledge, Packard Bell machines don't have standard internals (and so a new motherboard won't fit inside the case). Time to use it as a doorstop and start over with something different?

STATES OF PLAY

Q I am currently looking into transferring overseas to the USA with my company, and it seems like the perfect opportunity to buy a new PC. I'm sure that my current PC
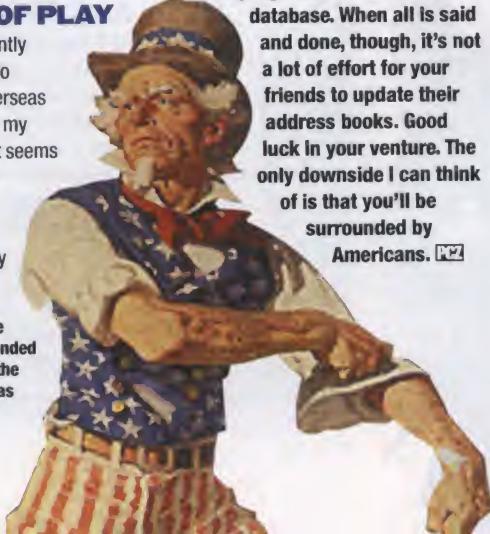
➲ Petrol may be cheaper, but branded kit costs about the same in the US as it does here.

would work over there but my wife doesn't know that! (*She does now, silly – Wandy.*) What are the prices for new PCs in the US compared to here in the UK?

I'm a regular net user who plays a lot of *Strike Force* and *Counter-Strike*, so what would I need to get the best Internet connections in the US? I presume it means a cable modem: do you have any idea of the costs involved or who would install them?

I'd also like to keep my current email address as my mates already know it. I think I have to dial in every 90 days to keep it active, but that wouldn't be cheap from the USA.

Andy Wilson

A Contrary to popular belief, PCs in the States are no longer cheaper than PCs in Britain. Across the pond, a 733MHz Toshiba 3300 can be had from Computers4SURE at US$769, which equates to about £546. Here, the exact same PC from Dabs.com is £465 plus VAT – in other words, £546. The same story is true of hundreds of other branded products: there's little to separate them, and anyone who says otherwise has obviously not seen recent exchange rates.

As for choosing an ISP, that really hinges on where you're going. The US telecommunications market was torn into little bits a few years ago to encourage competition (and it really worked – Oftel, take a hint). So it depends where you end up. You should have a choice of cable, assuming you're living in or near a city and not in the middle of Kansas. If not cable, you should be able to get DSL (like our ADSL, but the same speed upstream as down). The installation prices I've seen won't break the bank.

You're unlikely to be able to keep your email address. As you say, most freebie ISPs in this country have a 'dial in every xx days or we nuke your account' clause. Which is fair enough, as it allows 'dead' accounts to be purged from their user database. When all is said and done, though, it's not a lot of effort for your friends to update their address books. Good luck in your venture. The only downside I can think of is that you'll be surrounded by Americans. [PCZ]

WATCHDOG

The software industry can sometimes be a closed shop when it comes to punters and their complaints. Let *PC ZONE* ramraid their premises for you and snatch some answers...

● **WRITER** Adam Phillips

VANISHING ACT

Q If you are considering buying a new PC, avoid Time computers like the plague. I ordered a new PC from them and received it mid-September, but from day one it just wouldn't work, so I spent a whole day and a lot of money on the phone to them. I was always told that I needed another department and was given yet another phone number – six in all and I ended up phoning most of them more than once and was left on hold 80 per cent of the time.

Eventually, I was told that I should have a Reload CD with my computer… errr… nope. In that case, I should have been offered one when I bought my PC at the same time I was offered an extended warranty… errr… nope… and what extended warranty? This was the first I'd heard of it anyway. They agreed to send me the Reload CD after a lot of arguing about who was going to pay for it. After working out I'd spent nearly £1,500, it certainly wasn't going to be me.

After waiting two weeks, it eventually arrived and I managed to solve the problem, or at least that's what I thought. Two days later, it crashed out again with no way to get it started, not even with the Reload CD. So, after phoning Time yet again, we eventually got them to take it back and fix the bloody machine.

So off it went along with the Reload CD – just in case that was faulty as well. After waiting yet another week, I finally have a computer that works but, hold on, something's different – my PC went away with Windows ME and a Reload CD, but came back with Windows 98 and no CD!

To say that I'm hacked off is an understatement, and to top it all off, this morning I received a backup CD pack from them that I didn't even order or need – and an invoice for £20. I have tried to email Time, but have had no reply, and I refuse to phone them again at £1 per minute only to talk to some idiot who hasn't got a clue and only wants to leave you on hold all the time.

Alan Barber

Even Paul Daniels can't solve this vanishing act.

UNTIMELY TIME

A serious waste of Time…

Q Nearly two and a half months ago, I decided to take the plunge with Time Computers and ordered an Intel P3 733 Time machine computer. Since £1,100 is a lot of money, I phoned on five occasions to make sure that it was what I wanted. My two main questions were: does it have an AGP slot? And: would I void my warranty by installing a new graphics card? I was told it had an AGP slot and I wouldn't void my warranty by fitting a new graphics card.

So I went ahead and ordered the computer plus a Geoforce 2 GTS card. The machine turned up about two weeks later with my graphics card arriving two days after that. I opened the machine to find there was no AGP slot. I phoned up and was directed to technical support (which is £1 a minute) where a helpful guy gave me a list of computers with an AGP slot. We eventually settled on an 800 Athlon machine as a tower-for-tower swap.

This is where it got silly – I was told on five occasions someone would phone me, but I heard nothing back. Now, anyone who's tried phoning Time will know it's almost impossible to get through without at least half an hour wait. When I did get through, I was treated like a criminal by the woman I spoke to who expected about £200 more from me!

When I explained that I had phoned on five different occasions to make sure the machine was what I wanted, she told me there's a 14 day period where if they sell me goods that are wrong because their staff don't know what they are selling me, then it's tough. And I should expect to pay the difference. After getting into an argument, she hung up on me. So I phoned again and was told someone would phone me back but I still received no call.

Then my girlfriend had a try and was told that if she paid another £50, it would be sent out. Unknown to me, she paid the amount only to receive a 700 Duron with a CD writer, which I didn't want. So after phoning again, we went through to someone higher up to be told that we would have a priority doorstep tower-for-tower swap, yet again being told on three separate occasions that we would be phoned about it. Trouble is, whenever we ring the person is at lunch or on the phone. It's now two and half months later and I still have this Duron system. And phone bills adding up to £200.

Dean Taverner

A Box shifters. Sorry. Computer retailers. Don't ya just love 'em?

Buying from Time has proved a hairy experience for some of you.

Watchdog sent your complaint to Time and was told that on the same day we sent through your complaint to them, your 'replacement' machine was delivered. Surely a coincidence.

They go on to say that they experienced a few "teething problems", which have now been resolved. "This could account for why Mr Taverner experienced the problems he did. The new system is now fully operational and currently we are intensively training 50 customer service reps a month so we can assure Mr Taverner that, from January 2001, these problems will disappear."

Two things here. First, there was no offer of compensation for the money you wasted talking to them on the phone in the first place – after all, if your allegations of £200 plus being spent on their 'help' line are true, then they got most of the extra cash they wanted in the first place anyway. Secondly, please, please, please readers, cover your asses in the future, get all the specs of your intended purchase in writing from a computer retailer. That way, you can fax it through to them immediately if the wrong kit turns up and they can't demand more money because it was their cock-up in the first place.

If they won't put anything in writing, walk away – there are other dealers out there.

No stupid, not that type of Time Machine

Ho-hum… let's cut to the chase: "No payment has been taken for the Reload CD," Time tells us. "In regard to the invoice for £20, it is now standard to send invoices out for all items, although there is no charge to Mr Barber for this. Customer services are liaising with Mr Barber to replace the order for the Reload CD."

Great. So what about the supposed Windows ME vanishing trick? Or the lack of the Reload CD in the first place? Or the confusion over the extended warranty? Or the phone number equivalent of musical chairs? No doubt, that was down to "teething" problems as well…

Never mind, Alan, when it comes to getting a new PC, we wonder if you will be returning to Time as a repeat customer. In the meantime, keep us posted on how you and your Time machine are getting along.

BT CLOSED WORLD
The Complaints

Q BTopenworld, like so many BT services, has been a bloody nightmare. Firstly, there was the huge delay in actually getting the home user service launched, but that was fair enough if they were making sure it worked. Then, after hearing some concerns about technical compatibility with some online software, I discussed it with their technical support and was told: "It's like a normal dial-up connection, only faster." This sounded suspect and I was right. There are restrictions on the service, confirmed by their own literature and some lengthy forum posts on net4nowt. It's not good when the techs don't even know their own service.

> **"It's impossible to get through to Time without a half an hour wait. When I did get through, I was treated like a criminal and asked for another £200"**
>
> DEAN TAVERNER ON HIS PC PROBLEMS

I finally got the email allowing me to make an order and was told, subject to a line test, that an engineer would be coming to install my shiny new ADSL line in three weeks (October 20) and that a welcome pack was in the post. I was also told I could only book with a credit card – something that is not only ridiculous, but is also not mentioned in any marketing literature.

Anyway, along comes the install date, and, lo and behold, no welcome pack, no engineer, and on calling them (after a 45 minute hold), I was told "no line test" either. It seemed they'd forgotten about me. I was then told that the date I was given was only a provisional one and was not confirmed. This was in contradiction to the impression I had been given originally. The friendly and helpful customer service advisor I spoke to said this was a known issue – people not being told the date was provisional – and apologised, telling me they'd re-order the line test (two days to be completed, apparently). Then I'd have to call them to see if it had been successful. Then I could actually make a booking with the engineer, with yet another two/three week wait.

Andy Bellenie

Q Mid-September this year, I ordered ADSL through an ISP called TimeWarp, knowing that my exchange was ADSL enabled. I was informed by TimeWarp that BT had rejected the order because my line was too old and had too much line noise, etc.

So I decided to order a new line that should solve the problem and BT assured me it would be fine for ADSL conversion. A week passed but I heard nothing so I contacted BT to find out what was happening, only to find out they had no record of my order – so I had to re-order the new line.

Finally, after many delays and excuses, on Monday October 9, my new line was installed, so I asked TimeWarp to re-submit the ADSL order. I was told by the man at TimeWarp that the new line was of no use either. The reason BT gave was that the wiring between my home and the exchange was also too old. This says to me that they are not spending money or effort upgrading their antiquated systems. What has upset me is that I have spent £50 on a new line having been told a lot of lies by BT.

Miss J Beetham

The Official Response

A Two strong complaints which BT has decided to respond to with a single response. It begins: "You will have seen the news release that BT issued on November 2. This explained the situation on the ADSL installations to ISPs." To preface, the press blurb says that the ADSL uptake is very good in the UK and that BT is ensuring it will keep on top of any problems experienced by customers.

It continues: "BTopenworld, like many other ISPs in the UK, buys its broadband service from BT. As you know we've had very positive interest in BTopenworld's ADSL services, and we are sorry that installations have taken longer than expected. We apologise to our prospective customers for the delay and inconvenience this has caused."

They say that they want to increase the number of installations, "adding to the hundreds of customers a week being connected at the moment. We shall keep our customers informed and let them know realistically when they can be installed. We'll be sending out emails to everyone who has registered an interest with us or placed an order. We'll also be posting updates on our websites."

BT insists it is listening to customers and has introduced improvements to the service but point out, "this is a new technology and, like other UK companies, we're experiencing teething problems."

BT says it has already fixed many of these issues and "will continue to be honest and up front with customers."

Great. In the meantime, let us know if your problems have been resolved by the time you have read this… PCZ

Waiting for BT to get their act together

READ ME

If you are writing in to complain about a product, whether it be a ropey piece of software or a shoddy PC, please supply us with your full name, address and contact number. With PCs especially, make sure that you also include all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers. It means that we can resolve your problems much quicker.

PCZONE TOP 100

Welcome to the definitive buyers' guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages represent the best titles across all genres. Check here for regular updates

This is the new *PC ZONE* Top 100. Within it you will find the best games you can currently buy for your PC. All the games here deserve a place in our illustrious Top 100 as we go to print, but that could all change next month when newer titles come in and older games receive new ratings to reflect where they stand in the great scheme of things. Shrewd buyers will always check here first before parting with their money.

BENCHMARK GAME

Benchmark titles are the games that you simply must have if you are a fan of the genre. They are considered by the *PC ZONE* team to be absolute classics and should be bought without hesitation. All new games are compared to their genre's benchmark title when they are reviewed. Bear this in mind before writing into Mailbox

complaining that the latest 3D shooter didn't automatically get 90 per cent: check here first to see what it's up against! Additionally, all games in that genre will receive a new rating every time a new benchmark title comes along.

NEWENTRY

In the wonderful world of PC gaming, new titles come in every month, some of which are better than the games currently in the Top 100. When this happens, they will gain their rightful place in the Top 100 and lesser titles will drop out to make room for them.

BUDGET

If a game in the Top 100 is available on budget, it will be tagged accordingly. Games that are lower in price than other titles in their genre do not necessarily receive a new score to reflect this. The latest score the game received will still apply – it's up to you to decide whether or not the game is worth buying at its new price point.

Under the *ZONE* scoring system, new games will have to be pretty spectacular to receive this award. They will have to take their genre to unprecedented new heights and represent a major step forward for PC gaming. There are now very few titles that can justifiably be described as *PC ZONE* Classics. This trend will continue across all genres. Generally speaking, all *ZONE* Classics are must-have titles – the benchmark title being the definitive game of the genre – but that does not mean you should discount games that score 80+ per cent. These games receive the *PC ZONE* Award For Excellence and are essential buys if you are a fan of the genre the game fits into. Classics, on the other hand, are games we think will appeal to everyone and will bring new fans to that particular genre. There will not be many of them, but when we say a game is a classic, we *mean* it.

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

HALF-LIFE

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #71 · 95%

Taking the first-person shooter as its starting point, *Half-Life* redefines the genre with an engrossing story, cracking atmosphere and some of the best AI ever coded. *Half-Life* is probably still the best game you can install on your PC, and it's now available with the superb *Opposing Force* add-on in the 'Generations' pack.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209 100

BUDGET

UNREAL TOURNAMENT   PCZ #81 · 90%

Played over a network or the Internet, *Unreal Tournament* is more than a match for *Quake III*'s multiplayer, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. The single-player mode might be too short, but it's still going to be more than a challenge for most.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199

QUAKE III ARENA   PCZ #87 · 89%

The biggest brand name in PC gaming is back. The sheer speed, intensity and unrelenting action of *Quake III* make it an essential purchase for all shoot 'em up fans, but sadly the lack of variety prevents it from topping *Unreal Tournament*.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

GUNMAN CHRONICLES   PCZ #97 · 87%

While comparisons to *Half-Life* are inevitable, *Gunman* contains more than enough nuances to stand out on its own merits. With a superb array of weapons, intense battles and a gripping atmosphere it's a must buy for any fan of the genre.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209 100

PROJECT IGI   PCZ #97 · 85%

Combining the action of *Soldier Of Fortune* with the stealth of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Project IGI* is the thinking man's FPS. It features vast, open landscapes, and its clever changes of pace and espionage orientated storyline will keep you engrossed throughout.
PUBLISHER Eidos• 020 8636 3000

STAR TREK: VOYAGER – ELITE FORCE PCZ #94 · 84%

The first single-player game to use the *Quake III* engine, *Voyager* offers enough thrills to please even the hardest of Trekkie haters. A new scripting system and some clever team fighting by your side, renew faith in an increasingly multiplayer genre.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

THIEF II: THE METAL AGE   PCZ #88 · 82%

The original *Thief* set new standards in FPS titles with its move away from mindless action towards stealth and its excellent use of light and sound. This sequel delivers more of the same quality gameplay, minus the out-of-place zombie levels.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

ALIENS VS PREDATOR   PCZ #77 · 80%

It might not be the best FPS you can buy, but it's definitely the scariest. *Aliens Vs Predator* is also the only game that offers three distinct ways of playing through the game, so if you're looking for a solid single-player blast, this provides excellent value for money.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE   PCZ #89 · 79%

More like an arcade explosion of unmitigated violence than a FPS in the *Half-Life* mould, *SoF* is a great deal of fun. It's also very sick. If you can stomach amputations and decapitations, then we can guarantee you pure, mindless entertainment.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700
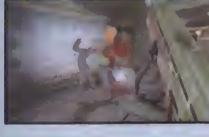
KISS PSYCHO CIRCUS   PCZ #93 · 77%

The team of *Daikatana*-defectors have come up with a much better game – using the LithTech engine and basing the levels on songs by Kiss. This is not cutting-edge gaming, but you'll find it is a solid, fun shooter.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

STRATEGY

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #89 · 93%

Shogun is the first strategy game that has blown us away in a long time. Command enormous armies in epic and bloody battles, send ninjas to assassinate enemy generals and conquer your way through the map of feudal Japan. The 3D engine works beautifully and the in-game options never get in the way of instant playability.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

AGE OF EMPIRES II   PCZ #84 · 88%

It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *AOE II*, the gameplay has been honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. Forget the hype of *Tiberian Sun* and opt for this classic RTS.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

GROUND CONTROL   PCZ #92 · 87%

RTSs are increasingly dropping resource management in order to concentrate on strategy. *Ground Control* pulls this off with flair, gorgeous looks and a brilliant camera. If you're after a 3D strategy title but don't fancy samurais, this is the answer.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

CALL TO POWER II   PCZ #98 · 86%

NEW ENTRY *Civilization II* is one of the best games of all time, but that doesn't mean it doesn't need updating. It might not have the official *Civ* endorsement, but *Call To Power II* still retains the spirit of the game, while polishing almost every aspect of the gameplay.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

SUDDEN STRIKE   PCZ #96 · 86%

Sudden Strike mixes WWII action with a heavy dose of realism, in order to create a compelling RTS. Its clever resource management, huge selection of units and separate campaigns, make it a must for RTS fans looking for something a bit different.
PUBLISHER CDV • 0208 880 4144

ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS   PCZ #97 · 85%

From the creators of *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III*, comes this intricate yet hugely playable micro-management god game. It's hugely addictive, but suffers slightly from its lack of multiplayer options and a poor combat system.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209 100

HOMEWORLD: CATACLYSM   PCZ #96 · 85%

Relic's mission to improve the already superb 3D RTS *Homeworld*, has proved to be a great success. The *Homeworld* universe has been expanded, providing a more elaborate storyline and greater scope for tactical options than its predecessor.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209 100

EARTH 2150   PCZ #90 · 84%

A fantastic 3D engine and great detail team up with sheer playability to make this one of the best RTSs around. Second only to *Shogun* this year, *Earth 2150* is a more traditional strategy title, but it takes the genre even further than it has been before.
PUBLISHER Mattel Interactive • 0144 424 6333

C&C: RED ALERT 2   PCZ #95 · 82%

After the disappointment of *Tiberian Sun* we weren't expecting much from this sequel, but we were pleasantly surprised. *RA2* manages to mix a believable story line with enhanced gameplay and extremely versatile units. An entertaining sequel.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

IMPERIUM GALACTICA II   PCZ #85 · 79%

Space expansion and empire building have never looked so good. This title boasts the depth of a turn-based strategy game with the immediate action of real-time, plus a great interface and tutorial, which means you'll know your way around in no time.
PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 020 7258 3791

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

ACTION/ADVENTURES

DEUS EX

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #93 • 94%

⚙ Warren Spector takes the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief* and weaves an RPG of complex beauty that revolutionises computer games. A fascinating sci-fi plot and complete player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is such a landmark wonder.
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

SYSTEM SHOCK 2   PCZ #80 • 91%

⚙ Definitely one of the most compelling, original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it in the house on your own with the lights off to prove how hard you are.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE – REDEMPTION   PCZ #92 • 89%

⚙ This amazing RPG is a treat to play. An epic storyline, tactical combat and great acting and music more than make up for the fact that it's a linear hack 'n' slash game at heart.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT   PCZ #87 • 87%

⚙ An incredible game from Black Isle, creators of *Baldur's Gate*. It's a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG. Moreover, the character development is the best we've seen in any game of its kind and the story is compelling, with well-scripted dialogue.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

BALDUR'S GATE II   PCZ #96 • 85%

⚙ The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. Although this sequel is not vastly different, it is bigger, better and extremely addictive. *Baldur's Gate II* is a must for all RPG fans.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

FINAL FANTASY VII   PCZ #66 • 80%

⚙ Despite the recent release of *FFVIII*, we still rate this earlier episode in the series above it. The story is better, there are more subgames and the whole thing is more involving, especially if you like Japanese-style cartoony graphics. And it should be out on budget soon.
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

FALLOUT 2   PCZ #71 • 79%

⚙ Does exactly what it says on the tin. Twice as big as the original, but utilising the exact same engine. If you liked the first game, you'll love this – not twice as much, but certainly for twice as long. A real life-sapper and one of the best RPGs money can buy.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

DIABLO II   PCZ #93 • 72%

⚙ Blizzard might have repackaged the original *Diablo* and produced an even bigger version with the same graphics and gameplay, but its fans aren't complaining. It's already one of the hottest and biggest-selling games ever.
PUBLISHER Havas Interactive • 0118 920 9100

ICEWIND DALE   PCZ #93 • 75%

⚙ Despite the introduction of larger enemies, *Icewind Dale* is little more than an add-on pack for *Baldur's Gate*. It looks the same and it plays the same, which isn't surprising since it's made by the same people. Very good, but we'll wait for *BG2*.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

ODIUM   PCZ #87 • 70%

⚙ Imagine an RPG in the style of *Final Fantasy* with battle sequences à la *X-COM* and you'll have a pretty good idea of what *Odium* is like. The story is set in a European city populated by UN soldiers and a variety of monsters. In short, it's curiously compelling and it will keep you hooked for a while.
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

GRIM FANDANGO

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #71 • 88%

⚙ If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. Sublime graphics and genuine humour ensure it's a classic of its genre. A word of warning: it's bloody hard and, if your mind doesn't work laterally, you'll be playing it until the day you die.
PUBLISHER LucasArts • 020 7368 2255

BUDGET

DISCWORLD NOIR   PCZ #79 • 87%

⚙ Although the point-and-click adventure genre is dying, *Discworld Noir* is very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and is all the better for it in our opinion, particularly if you're not a fan of Terry Pratchett's zany, off-the-wall humour. Don't miss it.
PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 020 7258 3791

SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS   PCZ #98 • 87%

NEW ENTRY Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside of *Soldier Of Fortune* will find much to like in *Severance*. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and console-style combos.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814 132

HITMAN: CODENAME 47   PCZ #98 • 85%

NEW ENTRY Bringing back memories of *Leon* and *Day Of The Jackal*, *Hitman* recreates the cool excitement of carrying out a contract. Snipe from rooftops, disguise yourself in the uniforms of your victims and walk away from explosions with calm elegance.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

THE NOMAD SOUL   PCZ #83 • 86%

⚙ Distinctly odd, but original nonetheless, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge, intricate world populated by lap-dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost manages to pull it off.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

BLAIR WITCH VOL 1: RUSTIN PARR   PCZ #96 • 84%

⚙ As well as being a truly scary action/horror title, this is one of the finest action/adventure games we've played. The suspense is incredible, and a constant stream of jump-out-of-your-seat moments will leave you with a distinct lack of clean underwear.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE   PCZ #84 • 83%

⚙ LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest *Indy*, with the adventure elements still in place.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000

DEEP SPACE NINE: THE FALLEN   PCZ #98 · 82%

NEW ENTRY It's not often a game with little promise on paper surprises us so nicely. *DS9* is a third-person action/ adventure that offers you the chance to control Sisko, Kira or Worf. Gameplay is different for each character, which provides longevity in spades.
PUBLISHER Simon & Schuster • 01256 707767

METAL GEAR SOLID   PCZ #96 • 82%

⚙ Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), *MGS*'s tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses makes it stand out from the majority of similar PC titles.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

MESSIAH   PCZ #85 • 81%

⚙ Shiny's wonderful shooter features a chubby cherub, but also a bunch of whores and lots of gratuitous swearing. As Bob, under-age agent of God, you must possess people's bodies and, like a good and typically hypocritical Christian, kill everything that gets in your way.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

RACING GAMES

FLIGHT SIMULATORS

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #98 · 86%

NEWENTRY With all the rally games available it was always going to be interesting to see how 2.0 would fare. Unsurprisingly, it blows away the competition. The graphics are superb, the detail all-encompassing and the car handles beautifully. If you've been waiting patiently for the definitive rally game, this is it.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2   PCZ #96 • 84%

✪ Buckle up for some high-speed driving action, as you race around the streets of London and San Francisco in this sequel. You won't find a more entertaining arcade driving game. The original MM was a belter, but with more cars and races, and improved controls, MM2 is the new daddy.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

F1 CHAMPIONSHIP: SEASON 2000   PCZ #97 · 82%

✪ While lacking the detailed realism of GP3, EA's latest F1 offering provides more fun and adrenaline pumping moments than any other PC F1 game. With its mixture of arcade action and realism it is both accurate and easy to pick up.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549 442

LE MANS 24 HOURS   PCZ #87 • 81%

✪ Although not quite as challenging as the race it's based on, Le Mans 24 Hours is a driving game for skillful players who know their brakes from their elbows. You can even get involved in a rewarding career mode, culminating in the famous race itself.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199

GRAND PRIX 3   PCZ #94 · 80%

✪ This F1 title displays all the customary Crammond perfectionism. The detail is amazing, which makes it all the more puzzling as to why there is no team work. Don't expect much more than a 3D accelerated GP2, but if that's what you're after you'll love it.
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive • 020 8569 1234

INSANE   PCZ #97 · 78%

✪ Primarily an online racing game, Insane allows you and your friends to indulge in some off-road racing mayhem in a range of different vehicles. Its wide selection of races will have you in hysterics, but the novelty does wear off pretty quickly.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

NEED FOR SPEED PORSCHE 2000   PCZ #90 • 78%

✪ Not as good as hooking up with your mates at the arcade, but still a damn good conversion of a damn fine game. Forget realism and concentrate on flinging your car around the track as fast as you can. Who needs depth when racing is this exciting?
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

RALLY MASTERS   PCZ #89 • 77%

✪ Rally games tend to blend into one another quite seamlessly. After all, the cars look exactly the same and they go round the same tracks. Rally Masters, however, offers the all-important feel of a great driving game together with loads of options and some tasty graphics.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199

TOCA 2   PCZ #76 • 76%

✪ Predictably, Codemasters has gone and done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make TOCA 2 an essential purchase for petrolheads. Graphically, it may not be a massive improvement, but gameplay-wise it definitely is.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP   PCZ #84 • 75%

✪ Close, but no McRae. That was the verdict from the boy Hill on this new racer. It looks fantastic and the on-screen Ordnance Survey map is a nice touch, but it's let down by some poor camera angles and unnecessarily solid obstacles. Ouch.
PUBLISHER Actualise • 01625 855015

FALCON 4

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #72 • 89%

✪ We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. Falcon 4 sports beautiful 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure that leaves the competition standing. If you're going to buy one flight sim, make it this one – we guarantee that you won't be disappointed.
PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893893

B-17 FLYING FORTRESS: THE MIGHTY 8TH   PCZ #96 • 87%

✪ B17 reproduces the experience of piloting a WWII bomber. Everything's covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks.
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive/Microprose • 01454 893 893

COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2   PCZ #97 · 87%

✪ If WWII dog fighting is your thing, then this is the game you have been waiting for. Its excellent user interface, engrossing campaigns, intense combat and superb graphics all come together to create a true sense of excitement and realism.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

BUDGET

F-22 TOTAL AIR WAR   PCZ #68 • 85%

✪ This full-price new version of DID's masterpiece may seem a bit of a rip-off for anyone who already owns F-22 ADF, but those of you who are looking to buy one of the greatest combat sims of recent years should seriously consider this title.
PUBLISHER Ocean/DID • 0161 832 6633

F/A-18E SUPER HORNET   PCZ #83 • 84%

✪ If you like your flight sims to be realistic with a great big capital 'R', look no further. In fact, this game is so life-like that the US navy has adopted it for promotional work and ground-based familiarity training. But make sure you watch out for friendly fire.
PUBLISHER Titus Software • 01926 335 5400

MIG ALLEY   PCZ #80 • 84%

✪ MiG Alley gives hardcore flight simmers' piloting skills a run for their money, but don't let that put you off. If you're willing to put in the work, this title will repay you with a wealth of excellent in-flight graphics and a selection of brilliant mission-planning elements.
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337

FLIGHT UNLIMITED III   PCZ #82 • 83%

✪ For all those sim aficionados who enjoy the experience of flying for its own sake rather than as a lame excuse for blasting other flying things to bits, this (along with the Flight Sim series) is an object of worship and devotion. It certainly deserves high praise.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

CRIMSON SKIES   PCZ #96 • 82%

✪ This game moves away from the detailed simulation mould of so many plane games, and concentrates more on all out dogfighting. It's instantly gratifying, fast paced, entertaining and adds a much needed twist of humour to an otherwise serious genre.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

FLANKER 2.0   PCZ #85 • 82%

✪ Hardcore pilots with a taste for Yankie blood need look no further. Extremely hard to fly, but very rewarding nevertheless, Flanker 2.0 recreates the real thing in minute detail. However, be warned: hours of practice are needed before you can go off shooting stuff.
PUBLISHER SSI • 01293 651300

ENEMY ENGAGED: COMANCHE HOKUM   PCZ #89 • 82%

✪ The latest helicopter sim to hit the shelves, it is also the best one to date. In no other game do you feel the excitement of being involved in a real war, largely due to an excellent dynamic campaign mode.
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337

SPORTS

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #98 · 88%

NEW ENTRY *Pro Skater 2* is an unbelievable experience. The sense of speed and balance is uncanny, and there is almost as much satisfaction to be had from pulling off an acrobatic new move as there is from watching your skater break every bone in his face as he smashes against the concrete. Oh, and the music's fantastic too.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000

FIFA 2001
PCZ #97 · 83%
✪ Once again the FIFA franchise gets its yearly make over. There are only minor improvements over the last version, but it's still the best football game for the PC. The player animations and presentation are immaculate.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

SUPREME SNOWBOARDING
BUDGET
PCZ #85 · 83%
✪ *Snowboarding* is not a sport you'd expect to captivate a PC audience, but this game gives as exhilarating an experience as you could hope for without breaking a leg. Oh, and all the streetwise attitude you'd expect, of course.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 8738 8199

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000
PCZ #92 · 82%
✪ It's really not much different from last year's title, but this edition has enough subtle tweaks to make it a worthy purchase. It also has the best control system we've seen in what is definitely the best golf game available.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

NBA LIVE 2000
PCZ #85 · 82%
✪ As slick as always, but what makes this special is the inclusion of teams from the '50s onwards, comedy haircuts and all. It's not quite as immediate as *Inside Drive*, it's a more complete simulation of the sport all round.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

MANAGEMENT

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 00/01

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #96 · 93%

✪ This update for the greatest management game ever, sees the series improve yet again. New features include increased media involvement, greater backroom staff participation, a live league table and more player information. All this adds to the game's addictiveness, which will once again drain you of your free time and take over your life.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

THE SIMS
PCZ #87 · 85%
✪ This game offers a staggering amount of possibilities. Essentially, you create your own person, or family, and guide them through the ups and downs of life. It's the definitive docu-soap and makes for compelling gameplay.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

CAESAR III
PCZ #70 · 84%
✪ Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens. So what? So it's utterly absorbing and probably the most addictive god sim in existence.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

SIMCITY 3000
PCZ #74 · 83%
✪ Ten years on, *SimCity* remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings to try out and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.
PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01753 549442

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON
PCZ #75 · 82%
✪ Pack out your own theme park with the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up. From rickety wooden dippers to *Nemesis*-style, white-knuckle gurners, *RT* is hugely addictive.
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive • 020 8569 1234

SPACE COMBAT

X – BEYOND THE FRONTIER

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #82 • 87%

✪ The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic from Germany, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. The combat side of the gameplay may not be the best on offer, but with goods to trade and races to discover, it rewards patience with variety and months of play. This title is deeply hypnotic and beautiful, rather than tense and frenetic.
PUBLISHER THQ • 01483 767656

TERMINUS
PCZ #93 • 86%
✪ Who says the days of independent bedroom programming are over? *Terminus* proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and the passion. It just edges out *FreeSpace 2*.
PUBLISHER Vicarious Visions • www.vvisions.com

FREESPACE 2
PCZ #84 • 85%
✪ Completely different from *X*, *FreeSpace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It boasts a superb interface, epic story and amazing graphics, but it's a bit short-lived if you don't play online.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4222

X-WING: ALLIANCE
PCZ #77 • 81%
✪ At last! Fly the Millennium Falcon in the final episode of the long-running *X-Wing* series. Certainly the best-looking *X-Wing* game to date, *Alliance* is slow at first, but boy does it pick up later on.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

STARLANCER
PCZ #91 • 80%
✪ While *Starlancer* doesn't do anything startlingly new, it is a highly polished affair with compulsive gameplay and gorgeous visuals. A must for space sim fans.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000

3D ACTION/STRATEGY

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

BENCHMARK GAME
BUDGET

PCZ #79 • 90%

✪ You don't get a second chance in a real war, and *Hidden & Dangerous* is the game that comes closest to putting you in the middle of hell on earth. From the first mission it grabs you by the balls and doesn't let up until you're dead, with a bullet in the head. As a strategic shoot 'em up, games don't get any harder, or more compelling and atmospheric.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

SWAT 3
PCZ #85 • 87%
✪ Artificial intelligence doesn't get any better than this. Add some truly spectacular graphics, an ingenious command interface and edge-of-your-seat gameplay, and you've got a top title.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

GIANTS
PCZ #95 • 85%
✪ This mammoth and original 3D action/strategy game, includes third-person shooter, RTS, RPG and real-time combat elements. It also features a superbly balanced multiplayer option.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

ROGUE SPEAR
PCZ #84 • 83%
✪ We loved *Rainbow Six* and, although this follow-up can't match *Hidden & Dangerous* for intensity, it's a superb romp through the world of terrorism. Pick your team, kit them out and plan your missions carefully.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

BATTLEZONE 2
PCZ #84 • 79%
✪ Stunning graphics and a winning blend of strategy and first-person action in this sequel to the highly acclaimed *Battlezone*. The fight for world domination has never looked so good.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

ONLINE ONLY

EVERQUEST: THE RUINS OF KUNARK

PCZ #92• 90%

🔘 The combat-oriented online RPG of choice just got a whole lot better with this expansion pack. Chris Anderson has spent months casting spells with hundreds of other people and never stops talking about it, so there must be something special going on. *Ruins Of Kunark* doesn't really offer any radical changes, but in this case bigger really is better.
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

ALLEGIANCE
PCZ #91 • 82%

🔘 The first true online only space combat sim, *Allegiance* is a complex yet rewarding beast. Now you can fly around with hundreds of others, co-ordinating strategies and establishing chains of command.
PUBLISHER Microsoft• 0345 002 000

ASHERON'S CALL
PCZ #88 • 76%

🔘 The graphics and freedom to do almost anything make this title a commendable addition to the genre. But, as in real life, it's a great tragedy you can't kill other humans as most of the ones you meet deserve a good kicking.
PUBLISHER Microsoft• 0345 002 000

ULTIMA ONLINE: RENAISSANCE
PCZ #92 • 75%

🔘 It's been at the top for a while, but now that the sequel is on the way the original looks dated. *Renaissance* isn't enough of an improvement for it to compete with *EverQuest* – online RPGs are moving on.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

PLANETARION
PCZ #94 · 72%

🔘 Available free from the Net, *Planetarion* is the work of three out-of-work Norwegians. A turn-based sci-fi strategy game with minimal graphics, it still manages to absorb you with its playability.
PUBLISHER Planetarion • www.planetarion.com

MODS

COUNTER-STRIKE V1.0

PCZ #98 • 93%

NEWENTRY The most widely tested game ever finally comes out of its Beta stage. Most people had reservations about the new models, but you soon get used to their camp animations and begin to appreciate how much more detailed they are. You can expect to see the game improving, as the V1.0 tag suggests there will be plenty of updates in the future.
DOWNLOAD www.counter-strike.net

ROCKET ARENA 3
PCZ #94 • 89%

🔘 *Quake III* hasn't convinced everyone, but if you want pure deathmatch there's nothing better, especially when you add the *RA3* mod. You start off with full ammo and armour, and fight in specially designed one-on-one arenas. Class.
DOWNLOAD www.planetquake.com/quake3

STRIKE FORCE V1.4
PCZ #96 • 83%

🔘 Baring more than a passing resemblance to *Tactical Ops*, *Strike Force* is the best *UT* mod available, and if you're looking for something similar to *Counter-Strike* only with bots, look no further.
DOWNLOAD www.planetunreal.com/strikeforce

FIREARMS
PCZ #94 • 81%

🔘 Another copy of *Counter-Strike* for *Half-Life*? Well, yes, but *Firearms* looks set to be more epic in scope, with large maps, dozens of weapons to choose from, including grenade launchers, and the dreaded minefields.
DOWNLOAD www.firearmsmod.com

Q3 JAILBREAK
PCZ #92 • 81%

🔘 Quite often, the simple things in life are the most satisfying. Take JailBreak for example. It's *Quake III* with two jails and two sides, but the team-based play adds a balance that's not present in standard deathmatch modes.
DOWNLOAD www.teamreaction.com

PCZONE ALL-TIME CLASSICS

DOOM

🔘 This is the game that needs no introduction. Without *Doom* we wouldn't have had *Quake*, *Unreal Tournament* or *Half-Life*. Every time you play a first-person shooter you should take five minutes to pay homage to the game that changed the world as we know it. *Doom*, we thank you.

ULTIMA VII

🔘 Still the best of all the *Ultima* games, and probably the finest RPG ever seen on a PC. The graphics might be old-hat, but the gameplay certainly isn't. *Ultima VII* blends exploration and character interaction, and it's the last title in the *Ultima* series to give complete party control.

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD

🔘 We reviewed this game back in the first issue of *PC ZONE*. It was a landmark RPG then and it's still a landmark RPG now, although the graphics obviously look a bit tired and dated. Do we think it's the best RPG ever? Almost, but not quite. Cast your eyes up the mag a couple of inches for the answer to that question.

DUNE II

🔘 If you know your strategy, you'll know that *Dune II* is the game that's done more than any of its rivals to define the genre as we know it today. The 2000 update was disappointing, but only because it didn't add anything new. The fact that it still plays better than many new titles Is testament to its staying power.

SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER

🔘 EA's *FIFA* series might look the part, but we're convinced that *Sensible Soccer* was and Is the ultimate example of gameplay over presentation. With its famous top-down view, *Sensible* offers fast frantic action that does more to replicate the real-life game than any of its predecessors.

UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN

🔘 This game came out of nowhere and took the world by storm. Compelling strategy, tense turn-based battles and a myriad of research options made this the most addictive game ever upon its arrival. Subsequent sequels were just as addictive, but this is the game that originally captured our hearts.

MAGIC CARPET

🔘 Drawing gasps of amazement from everyone who saw it, Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet* was one of the most original and inventive games to be released in the early days of 3D. So original, in fact, that it never got the recognition it deserved. We still think the blend of action and strategy was spot-on.

WING COMMANDER

🔘 The original space combat game spawned the first big-budget PC series. In fact, the *Wing Commander* series was so hugely successful that they went and made a film. Inevitably, this was absolute rubbish and the public stayed away in their millions. Will these people never learn?

TOMB RAIDER

🔘 She might be getting a bit rusty round the gills, but when Lara first bounced onto the small screen, we fell in love with her instantly. 3D action adventure games haven't been the same since and at the time nothing could touch it. Do you remember your first encounter with the T-Rex?

CIVILIZATION

🔘 The original and some say the best turn-based strategy game. When *Civilization* first appeared, it was hailed correctly as the first game that changed and evolved depending on how you played it. Recent versions have presented more of the same, but in this case that is definitely no bad thing.

ONTHECD

Another fun-filled CD, full of tasters of some of the best games currently on the market

✪ **WORDS** Woods, Shoemaker, M Hill and Korda **DISC** Stonebridge

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

✪ You need at least a Pentium 266 with 32Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM.

✪ Many of the programs on our cover CD-ROM are designed to run under Windows 95/98 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium II 300 with 64Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.

✪ Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are 3D-accelerator only.

ON THE CD DEMOS

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2

Microsoft

EXCLUSIVE

We have lift off.

Now, that's precision parking.

What a rust bucket.

It'll end in tears. Don't say you weren't warned.

A nice shiny car, ripe for the thrashing and trashing.

Indulge your speed freak and law breaking tendencies with this follow up to Microsoft's *Midtown Madness*. Set in both London and San Francisco, you have to race around said cities as fast as you can, beating off the opposition and avoiding the local constabulary. The action is fast and frantic, and you'll have to be careful not to crash into too many lamp posts and buildings along the way, otherwise you'll end up trashing your car before you get to the finish line. This demo offers you a choice of two cars, a Ford Mustang and (wait for it) a Mini Cooper. Unfortunately you can't drive around London in this demo, but a section of San Francisco is on offer, for you to try out with three modes of play, Cruise, blitz and checkpoint. If for some reason you get tired of racing on your own, then give the multiplayer Blitz race a go. This is where *Midtown Madness* excels itself.

Controls Keypad or gamepad

➜

DIABLO II

Sierra

The sequel to everyone's favourite hack 'n' slash RPG might not have received a Classic or indeed an Award of Excellence from the *ZONE* crew, but millions of you disagreed with our verdict, voting with your wallets to make *Diablo II* one of the biggest-selling games of all time. If you're one of the few who decided not to take the plunge on our advice, this is a chance to see, free of charge, whether you agree with us or not.

There's no doubting the addictive nature of the beast, and although the graphical engine could do with an overhaul, the 'just one more dungeon' gameplay still shines through. This demo, contains a full two of the 22 quests for you to sample and the read-me file that you can access through the installation screen contains a full list of all the controls, and instructions to get

you started.
If you like what you're playing then you should remember that the main part of *Diablo*'s appeal is the Internet multiplayer side of things, which you can only experience by purchasing the full version of the game. Typical, eh?

Controls Mouse and keyboard
(see read-me for full instructions)

Exactly the same as the first one or just a brilliant game?

A portal to hell. Do you really want to go through?

BATTLE ISLE IV: THE ANDOSIA WAR

Blue Byte

The bugs are back in town.

Let the tanks go first. Very wise.

Not turn-based anymore, but still good.

When we first heard Blue Byte was resurrecting its ground-breaking turn-based strategy series we were elated. When it transpired the game would be both real-time and turn-based, all in 3D, we were a little worried. With a sigh of relief we can report that things have turned out rather well. The graphics look good, the turn-based combat and real-time resource management sit well together and apart from the linear campaign and fiddly control system, it's

an excellent game. Even better, with the demo on this month's CD, you can play through three tutorial missions to give yourself an idea of how this, the latest in the *Battle Isle* series comes together, after which a visit to the shops might be in order. To find out more, take a look at our review which starts on page 64. Then, when you've digested our verdict you can try it for yourself.

Controls Mouse and keyboard

Don't do it.

ALICE

Electronic Arts

After giving *Alice* such a build up and discovering it was little more than a glorified platform game we were bound to be disappointed. However, some people still rate it and this demo will let you see everything that's good about it and everything that's bad about it, making it easy for you to decide if you want to play the full game. The twisted take on Lewis Carroll's tale is apparent from the start, and makes a refreshing change from the sanitised crap we usually have to put up with. Thanks to an excellent use of the *Quake III* engine, the graphics look pretty special, although it isn't until later levels (not included in the demo) that you begin to see the really astonishing visual imagination that stunned us when we first saw the game running about a year ago. The controls are much the same as those of a first-person shooter, so running, strafing and shooting will all be second nature to you. Remember you can bring up the Cheshire Cat at any stage to explain how things work or to give you hints on how to get past a certain stage. The only weapon you get at the start is a butcher's knife so you'll have to get close to the card guards to get at them.

Controls Mouse and keyboard

Stay off the drugs.

Ahh, what a sweet little girl.

Take that stupid grin off your face.

NHL 2001

Electronic Arts

A sport where you're allowed, nay positively encouraged to smack your opponents up, and where scoring a goal is the secondary pursuit to said activity? It can only be ice hockey. And, if brutality on ice is your favoured sport (well it's got to beat Disney on ice) then EA's latest seasonal update is the best PC conversion money can buy.

What's more, this fantastic demo lets you try out an entire match – plenty of time to wedge some unsuspecting Canadian against the boards in the name of fair play.

Controls Gamepad or keyboard

Take his legs out.

Ya slapper.

← RESIDENT EVIL 3: NEMESIS
Capcom/Eidos

Told you that you were heading into trouble.

Don't go in there.

With even more zombies per square metre than before, *Nemesis* certainly holds no punches, or bio-infected undead gnawing teeth for that matter. As is the norm, the game throws you right in the middle of things and your character, Jill Valentine, gets attacked from all directions right from the start. The fact that it's an obvious PlayStation port with all the limitations that come with it is a bit jarring, but at least you can pump up the resolution as high as your 3D card will let you. Plug in your gamepad, keep your finger on the aim and fire buttons at all times and run like hell. It's the only way you'll survive.

Controls Keyboard

STARSHIP TROOPERS
Hasbro

Do you want to know more about this demo? Of course you do. *Starship Troopers* is a RTS based on the hit film of the same name, in which you take charge of a unit of Mobile Infantry men and guide them in daring missions against the Arachnid (giant man eating bugs) hordes. Before setting out on a mission, you'll have to select your team and equip them with the right weaponry for the mission ahead. Your enemies are incredibly tough, and take far longer to kill than your (in comparison) frail foot soldiers, so careful planning and quick thinking in the heat of battle are the order of the day. Attacks can come from the sky as well as from the ground, so stay sharp soldier.

Controls Mouse and keyboard

Above you. Above you.

Time to get your legs ripped off lads.

Not a Welshman to be seen.

SHEEP
Empire Interactive

Sunday evenings used to be great for watching television. Harry Secombe used to be on, so did Cilla, best of all was One Man And His Dog, where every week from some remote hillock, Phil Drabble would ruminate about the dank weather, while behind him shepherds whistled at dogs and the dogs in turn would straddle someone's trouser leg in the crowd while the sheep just looked embarrassed. Simple, catatonic and utterly British, much like the game *Sheep*, which although features a similar style of gameplay, is unfortunately without the vocal talents of is-he-or-isn't-he Mr 'Dead' Drabble, the Murray Walker of the sheepdog world.

Controls Mouse

ON THE CD PATCHES

It's not quantity but quality that matters

I bet you couldn't find two patches for better games if you tried. Fear not, patch hunters, next month we've got two CDs to celebrate our 100th birthday and we'll keep you up-to-date with everything you've missed.

ChampionshipManager 00/01 v3.86 Without player data update.

Deus Ex 1.104fm Adds multiplayer options to the best game of last year.

ON THE CD ONLINE

Make the Net work for you

Barry Dial
Dial-up software for the superb Barry's World

Barry's World
Double-click here for the information on Barry's World. (Requires a Web connection.)

Claranet
Sign up now to the UK's largest independent Internet service provider.

Datum Online
Find your next job online with Datum Online.

ON THE CD EXTENDED PLAY

Turn to page 138, where *Tony Lamb* gives you a run down of this month's collection of *Quake III Arena* maps

EXTENDED PLAY

This month, the *PC ZONE* sniperscope of fame is zeroed-in on id Software's outstanding first-person shooter *Quake III Arena*, and we have nine top-notch maps in our sights. Aim and shoot...

ON THE BENCH Tony Lamb

TRY IT YOURSELF

On this month's cover CD we've got all the maps mentioned in these pages. To try out any of these files, either run them as an .exe where appropriate or unzip them into your 'baseq3' diectory, find them on your map options and get fragging. You know it makes sense:

> **"You'll fight your way over pot plants, jump off cereal packets and run across the tastefully coloured lino as you set about slaughtering your opponents"**

QUAKE III ARENA

Ever since the original *Wolfenstein 3D* landed like a bombshell in front of PC gaming fans, every release from id software has been a thrill. First *Doom* and then *Doom 2*, before the *Quake* trilogy kept us glued to our PCs for hours of gib-filled action, atmosphere and sheer fun. We just really couldn't get enough.

Here, however, we're looking fondly back at *Quake III Arena*, which came close to winning our best first-person action game award for 2000, losing out only to the superb *Unreal Tournament* and the near legendary *Half-Life*.

It was a close fight and, although *Q3A* didn't quite win the top spot, it has to be said that neither of the other games can match it for either sheer pace or frantic blasting action.

Admittedly, the plot is sketchy at best. A long, long time ago, the Vadrigar built the arena in which the game is set and went about recruiting a bunch of suitably unhinged gladiators to populate it. This happy band of cutthroats were then required to go around chopping out each others' internal organs in order to keep the Vadrigar amused. Having earned yourself a rather frightening reputation, this is where you come in to add to the body count.

Eventually, you'll fight your way through all of the levels and then you'll fight to the death with Xaero – the Lord of the Final Arena. It's as simple as that.

Alternatively, you can just go ahead and install these maps instead...

● PADGARDEN
Filename: padgarden.zip
Size: 6,708Kb
Rating: ●●●●

↑ PadGarden – it's small but it's feature packed.

This map from detail-freak Padman is great fun. Everything towers above you here, be it the kiddies toys dotted around, the sun lounger or the bird table, and each can be explored. As you'll see in all of Padman's maps, the environment is full of vibrant colour and high in detail. The jump-pads are well placed and allow you to bounce around the place grabbing weapons and power-ups by the armful. The garden pond looks good enough to swim in and is well worth a dip – there are goodies in there. Find the pressure trigger on a rock in the middle, press it and go through the door that opens to find the BFG super-gun. Another pressure trigger will let you back out again.

● PADKITCHEN
Filename: padkitchen.zip
Size: 9,067Kb
Rating: ●●●●●

↑ PadKitchen has everything.

This one is positively strange. Perhaps inspired by waking up on the kitchen floor after a particularly good party, Padman has again taken a Lilliputian theme for his map design, and if you install it you'll find yourself in a giant kitchen that soars into the distance above your head. Whatever the reason for your tiny proportions, you and your midget enemies are in as much danger from falling down the plughole as you are from each other. Everything is brightly coloured – you wouldn't find these kitchen units in MFI – and the whole map is stuffed full with detail. You'll get to fight your way over pot plants, jump off cereal packets and run across the tastefully coloured lino as you set about slaughtering your opponents. Just watch out for the hot oven-ring. Being ultra picky, you could argue that this isn't a real *Quake III* map –

You need a hefty PC to cope with maps like this.

more an exercise in cleverness, but who cares? It's a doozie.

● PADCASTLE
Filename: padcastle.zip
Size: 3,789Kb
Rating: ●●●●●

↑ Padcastle just screams *Quake III* at you.

↑ A castle has to have a big table you know...

With PadCastle, the author has designed a map in the classic *Quake* mould. There's no mistaking what game this map is meant for. Everything from the gargoyles and spikes by the main entrance to the huge dining table and hanging flags in the hall screams *Quake* in big capital letters. Weapons, power-ups and health are well distributed, and the tight corridors mean that when the fighting starts, quick reactions will be all that save you from becoming a greasy splat on the floor. The map has a typically gloomy feel to it – just as a poorly lit mediaeval castle would do – with lots of gothic touches in its

Top levels of detail in the Padman maps.

design. The gargoyles glower down on the unfortunates fighting to their death below and every balustrade seems to be adorned with a skull. If you had any worries that Padman had lost the plot with the garden and kitchen maps, here's the proof that he's a true *Quake* fan at heart. A great deathmatch level that id itself would be proud of.

✪ PADHOME
Filename: padhome.zip
Size: 3,878Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪

⊕ Jump into the hole for a bounce to the power-up.

Hopefully this isn't a genuine recreation of Padman's home. If it is, then not only does he live in what must be a fantastic tourist attraction (or the inspiration for Dracula's castle), but he's also got the sort of interior design taste that would make the *Changing Rooms* team run away screaming in terror. The main hall is pure *Quake*, with its high ceiling, huge candle chandeliers and a couple of statues that would strike fear into the heart of any visitor. As with the PadCastle map, the atmosphere is heavy with doom and gloom, casting the player into an imposing and classic *Quake*-style world of instant death and gore. This is a home that the Addams family would be proud of but the rest of us can only marvel at. The walls are hung with blood-red banners and the floor gratings cover lava flows that shimmer underfoot, adding to the foreboding feel of the place. Even the garden with its grand

doorway looks dangerous to the unwary traveller!

✪ PADCENTER
Filename: padcenter.zip
Size: 9,046Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪
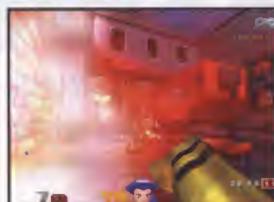
⊕ PadCenter – just for the fun of it...

If only all shopping centres could be like this – a full range of stores, conveniently laid out and only a handful of other shoppers to get in your way. Thankfully, you don't get people running around malls with machine guns (unless you're in America), but here you do and they're after more than just your parking space. The size of this map is some indicator as to the amount that has been crammed in – the file is a massive 9Mb compressed – and once you actually take the time to wander round and have a proper look you'll see that no effort has been spared to make every single shop. There's a little pond with ducks in it by the front door and posters dotted around that pay homage to just about every major sci-fi movie ever. Visit 'Ripley's Changing Room' (a dress shop) and spot the crossed-out alien face in the shop sign.

It's a shame that you can't actually go into the shops themselves but, judging by the size of the file already, this could make the PadCenter map bigger than the original game. Again, all the goodies you need are in plentiful supply and the whole thing works very well. Perhaps not a 'true' *Quake* map in that it doesn't have the atmosphere id intended, but well worth a thrash nevertheless.

TITAN ORBITAL PLATFORM

Johnny5

A simple map but power-ups and weapons galore make for some frantic action.

You can't kill the PadCenter ducks. I tried...

PADCENTRE

✪ PADPOOL
Filename: padpool.zip
Size: 7,675kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪✪

⊕ Grab one of these for 40 seconds of flight.

Set around a pool of water (surprise), this is one of PadMan's best maps. PadPool is a highly detailed visual feast, but the combination of almost ultra-violet background lighting with some of the weapon effects has to be seen to be appreciated. The stone duck in the middle of the pond can be used as an effective sniping position with the railgun, while players who like to explore a little will find flight power-ups that allow 40 seconds of aerial attack on your enemies. There are two of these and if you time it right you can fly from one to the other, happily fragging opponents from above. A cool effect here is the music – Wagner's *Ride Of The Valkyries* blasts inspiringly from your speakers as you launch your airborne onslaught. Check out the mini-castle for the rocket launcher and don't forget to look in the corners for other weaponry and health rewards.

✪ PADSPACE
Filename: padspaceb.zip
Size: 6,900kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪

This map feels as if it should have been a level for *Voyager: Elite Force* as the whole layout is so obviously influenced by everything Trekkie. Perhaps the author will adapt the map for

that game too. In the meantime, if you haven't yet invested in the *Quake III* powered *Elite Force*, PadSpace will give you an idea of the fun you could be having. As usual, there's loads of detail everywhere. That said, the map is quite dark and, with the cool lighting effects built in, it gets difficult to see your targets – although the bots never seem to have the same problem. Weapons, power-ups and health aplenty will keep you going for ages, but you need to set up six or more bots to keep the game moving. A must for *Star Trek* fans. There's even a pic of Seven of Nine on a wall – if you like that sort of thing.

✪ TITAN ORBITAL PLATFORM
Filename: orbplat.zip
Size: 1,794Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪
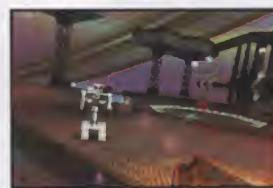
⊕ I just stepped over the edge... whoops...

A simple map from Biscuitman with a central arena and two levels of gangways above. There is nowhere to hide here and, as a result, the action is frantic – even with only a couple of players. Access to the higher levels is via a number of jump-pads, but the availability of the Railgun makes jumping a precarious business as you're just as likely to get picked off mid-jump as you are to reach your objective. You also have to get your jump right or there's a serious likelihood that you'll miss

the platform completely and plummet screaming to your death. While the map is simple, weapons are easily reached and in plentiful supply. Set it up with half a dozen bots and you're in for a serious test of reflexes.

✪ QRCTF1 – CAPTURE THE FLAG
Filename: qrctf1.zip
Size: 929Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪

⊕ Two approach routes make defence difficult.

This Biscuitman map is a classic Capture The Flag level with a true *Quake III* feel to it. You can get into the opposing base via jump-pads or a water tunnel, but the design makes it a hard attack to press home. Your enemies can defend well if they have their wits about them. There are big open spaces which make sniping with the railgun a possibility, but few places to hide so watch out if you get caught napping with a weapon that is slow to reload. It's good fun and a quick file to get up and running. PZ

THE LIONHEAD DIARIES

Creating a cartoon universe can be a monumental task, especially when it involves making the characters come alive on the screen with the right voices and in 12 different languages

⭐ **AS OBSERVED BY** Steve Jackson

NAILING THE FINAL SCRIPT

We've just hit the deadline for the 'localisation' of *Black & White*. The game is due to be translated into 12 'local' (in world terms!) languages. Apart from the obvious ones (German, French, Japanese etc), the game script will also be translated into Polish, Thai and even two types of Chinese.

B&W will not rely on a manual to teach players how to play. The game's instructions, along with hints and tips, are all narrated by two advisors – one good, one evil. It's up to you which advice you follow. But as you might expect, all this runs to a lot of text. The in-game word-count is up to 50,000 words. Scripter James Leach has written the equivalent of a paperback novel.

We've had to lock the text as early as possible so we could send it off in good time to the translators. James had the luxury of working closely with the game during development. But elsewhere, translators must use screenshots, notes, video footage and plenty of imagination to interpret what James meant. Instead of word-for-word literal translations, foreign translators must ensure the text comes alive in their native language. The way Eden's villagers speak, and the way the helpful 'Advisors' talk, all have their own style. What works in English might not work in other languages. "No gain without pain" might translate to "no improvement without injury", which just doesn't work at all. "You're so evil, you'd sell your own grandmother" might translate literally in one language to "...you'd sell to your own grandmother", which doesn't sound particularly evil – refusing to sell to your grandmother might be worse. Perhaps in another country, selling one's grandmother might even be normal behaviour. Well, maybe not, but you get the idea. Anyway, if there's a phrase that works in English but fails in French or Portuguese, it'll be replaced by something possibly quite different, which conveys the same meaning to French and Portuguese players.

Once the translation is complete, a recording script is produced and the search is on for the most versatile voice artists in each territory. One by one, hopeful candidates troop into the sound studio to audition. In my time I have sat through several voiceover auditions and I'm forever in awe of the talents of these so-called 'voice actors'. In the UK, the auditions were soon brought to a halt after one particular performance. We knew we had found the voice of *Black & White* in Marc Silk. Marc has been a professional voice artist for ten years and has done hundreds of voices for TV, radio and

adverts. He is the voice of cartoon characters Johnny Bravo and Scooby Doo. He was Aks Moe and Tae How in *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*. Marc admitted sheepishly that he was also in *Chicken Run*, as a 'background clucker'. When we invited him in a few months ago to audition for *B&W*, Peter, James and our head of sound Russell Shaw knew he was the right man for the job as soon as he opened his mouth.

"How would you imagine an evil angel sounds?" James asked him, handing over a sheet of text. "Maybe something like this?" Marc replied, and read the script out in a cartoon-style gangster voice, which was perfect. James and Russell creased up, prompting Marc to launch into his repertoire of character impersonations. He was Homer Simpson, Yogi Bear, an irate Scotsman and Buzz Lightyear – all the voices were spot-on. It was incredible to hear.

Marc peered at Russ's screen, which showed both Advisors bobbing up and down on it. Without even blinking, the perfect voice for the Good Advisor came from his mouth. Peter, Russ and James looked at each other again. They'd found the voice of both Advisors in one man. Especially appropriate when you consider the two Advisors are supposed to be both sides of the player's conscience, so they really are the same person. With the translation and recording time now scheduled in, getting the final script nailed down has been vital. But, of course, the whole team is also putting the finishing touches to the game. Things are still quite hectic all round at Lionhead Studios. At this stage, everyone is also playing the game. Peter noticed something interesting was happening. Everyone has been working on this project for three years, but there were still continual cries of: "Look at this! I didn't know that was in the game!" or "Hey, did anyone realise you can get your Creature to do this?"

We're very proud of the fact that *B&W* can still surprise and delight the people who created it, even after three years of development. As the artist Mark Healy said: "We've made Frankenstein's Monster. This thing is bigger than the code, the graphics and the sound. This is artificial life." The office was temporarily quiet. Everyone was deep in philosophical thoughts. Mark Webley's comment broke the silence. "Perhaps we ought to turn off our computers," he whispered. "To stop it escaping." **PZ**

Marc Silk during voice recording.

⭘ *As well as being a director of developer Lionhead, Steve Jackson is co-founder of Games Workshop, author of* Fighting Fantasy Gamebooks, *and a columnist for* The Daily Telegraph.

Attack of the 60ft cow.

Evil advisor.

Good advisor.

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO...

WEST RACING

Two brothers, an ultra-realistic engine and a race to the finish with an American giant. *Paul Presley* tags along for the ride as the West brothers prepare to give Bill Gates a run for his money

Not just brothers, but twins. Not just twins, but identical twins. Many developers try to call themselves 'one big family', but there aren't many that can make the claim for real. The West brothers, Chris and Tony, have been writing games for most of home computing's entire history, so it's all the more surprising that after all that time, they remain as an independent outfit. Especially in this corporate age of 20-man developers and super-publishers buying everything in their path. What's even more astonishing is that between them, they've managed to create not just a hyper-realistic looking racing game in *World Sports Cars*, but also one with the most realistic physics modelling ever likely to be seen on the PC.

It's pretty rare in this day and age to see a two-man team in action, especially brothers. There's the Collyers *with Championship Manager*, and you guys. And that's about it.
Chris: It's extremely rare.
Tony: But we've always been like that. It's how we've always worked and we work so well together that it would seem a shame to change that and spoil it. We've been doing it this way now for what, 15, 16 years?
Chris: About that, yeah. But with any other team you get all the conflicts, don't you? If somebody does something and the head programmer doesn't like it, then you'll upset the graphic artist and you won't always know that something is wrong straight away. Whereas Tony and I both know instantly if one doesn't like what the other one is doing so you don't have to worry about it.

"Whoops, no reaction there, better change it." That sort of thing. We don't have any arguments, we don't fall out over anything. Plus, we both like the same things so, at the end of the day, we're both heading towards the same goal.
Tony: You don't get any of the clash of personalities that we had before at other companies. You'll always get that with bigger teams. We like it small.

Are there times when you do wish you were part of a larger team? To share out some of the responsibility and so on?
Tony: No, it can get too stressful like that. I mean, the really hard bit comes from running a company at the same time. If it was just writing a game, then yeah, life would be really easy, but having to deal with all the business stuff as well is where the problems begin. We'd have to get someone in to deal with all that stuff and then we wouldn't know if we could trust them and everything.
Chris: We find it's best if we just stick to what we know.

Is everything on the game being done by yourselves or are there some parts that you farm out to others?
Chris: Nope, there's nothing farmed out. Possibly in the future there may be other people involved towards the very end, doing all the grunt work. But at the moment we're very happy doing it all ourselves.
Tony: Sound and music perhaps. We're not musicians, so we don't know much about all that. We might farm that out. Sound effects can be done pretty easily these days, you just sample a lot of stuff. There are companies that can find all the

right sounds for you, which stops you from worrying about matching everything up.
Chris: It's odd when you look at someone like EA, who had something like a hundred people working on *Need For Speed 5*. How do they make any money?
Tony: I can't wait to see how much money we're going to make with just two of us.

IT TAKES TWO, BABY

How is it that just the two of you are able to produce essentially the same kind of game that it takes a hundred people at EA to do?
Chris: Well, first, we love what we're doing. We've given up a load of stuff to get where we are. This is the game that we've always wanted to write. And secondly, we work 12, 13 hours a day, seven days a week usually. We know that everything we do is going to end up being used. If you're part of a large team you'll usually have something like five trainee programmers whose stuff probably won't end up being used. They're just there being trained up for work in the future. We know exactly what we want and how we're going to get there and it's just a matter of working smartly. Trying not waste your time too much on other stuff.
Chris: But it is a case of working constantly. We work from home, so pretty much the moment we get up, we can walk to the desk and start working. Sometimes we're still in our pyjamas. And if you enjoy it, you'll be getting up and be really looking forward to finishing off that car you were working on last night or putting a nice effect in or something. When you're really enjoying it, like we are, you can get a lot more done.

> **"We've given up a lot to get to where we are. We usually work 12 hours a day, 7 days a week"**
>
> CHRIS WEST, CO-CREATOR OF *WORLD SPORTS CARS*

Tony: We've done the nine-to-five thing. In the old Domark office environment you'd roll in at ten, have a cup of tea, have a cigarette, mess about for an hour, chat to everyone about what you did last night and so on. Then there'd always be the eternal coffee breaks coming along. You'd be lucky if you got through an hour's work in a day.

Chris: Not to mention all the exhausting office politics you have to get through.

Tony: When you know that you've got no distractions, then you know you can dedicate a whole morning to one big task rather than breaking it all up and coming back to it over a much longer period of time.

How long have you both been working on the game?

Chris: Ever since Virgin cancelled our rally game. So that would have been for about four years now.

Does having such prolonged development times bother you at all?

Tony: It's a bigger investment than it looks. We've

It's about bloody time someone designed a gravity-defying race car.

Same shirts, same haircut, same expression, yes they're twins.

got an engine now that can simulate *anything* with more than two wheels, we've got all the tools we need to produce a game based on that. So we can put out another racing game after this one incredibly quickly, without having to go back and reinvent everything. All that hard work has now been done. It's taken us a long time to get to this stage, but we're there now.

Chris: The game has changed a lot over time. Initially it was going to be a one-track Le Mans game with just a few cars. Now it's got eight tracks

with 20 cars... the game has expanded greatly. Plus the physics system today is no comparison to what we originally had planned. So in a sense we've been our own worse enemies. Empire has probably been shouting about us around the office, cursing us for taking so long.

You said you've been doing this for 15 years or so. Has it always been driving games?

Tony: No, no, no... but we've always wanted to do racing games.

Chris: This has always been the one we've wanted

to do. Ever since we had our Vic-20s and Commodore 64s, but they couldn't quite handle it.

Tony: We've got lots of little demos of racing games that we always used to knock up, but the machine they were on was never particularly good. We thought the Atari ST and Commodore Amiga might be able to handle it, but they didn't work either.

Chris: No, but we've done all sorts of crap in our time.

Tony: Yeah, we've done loads of rubbish along the way. *(laughs)* Any of Domark's back catalogues, we were there.

Chris: James Bond games, all sorts of stuff. We'll get that out of the way before you discover it all out.

I remember those. *Licence To Kill* **and all that...**
Both: Yep, that's the one!

> ❝If you're doing an arcade game, you're doing it for the money. We're doing it because we love racing cars❞
>
> **TONY WEST, DESIGNER OF** *WSC*

Spooky, which version?

Chris: Atari ST. The top down one. Where you hide behind barrels and shoot in eight directions.

Tony: That was my idea! And that was classic gameplay.

Chris: We came out early as well. Before the film was even out.

What led to the interest in World Sports Cars?

Tony: We did *Street Racer* for Ubi Soft then after that we thought we'd go off and do our own thing with a couple of other guys we were with at the time. Start our own development company. We started doing our own rally game for Virgin, but they cancelled that for reasons of their own. By that time there were loads of rally games coming

out so we decided to go down the sports car route. Which is what our interest has always been anyway. We've always wanted to do a Le Mans-style game so we thought why not? We could choose whatever we wanted to do, so we chose this.

Chris: Thank God, we didn't choose Formula One. Too much competition. Besides, the Le Mans series has now got bigger viewing figures in America than CART (*the US version of F1 – Sporty Ed.*).

KEEPING IT REAL

Why have you chosen to take the ultra-realistic route rather than something more basic, more arcadey?

Tony: Well, if you're doing an arcade game you're basically doing it for the money. We're doing it because, as we've said, it's the game we've always wanted to do. We love racing cars and there's no game so far that's really given us what we want.

Chris: *Grand Prix Legends* was close, but the cars that we want to drive are these modern ones.

Tony: The thing is, you start doing it and before you know what's happened you've ended up putting 6,000 polygons into a car. Then someone else comes along and says it looks fantastic and you end up feeling really good about it. So you don't go back.

Chris: It's the challenge thing as well. If you're doing an arcade game, you're not restricted to the real world, so you can get away with anything. If you're going 'real world', then you've got to get it right. I'm doing the programming and Tony's doing the cars, so it's up to him to make them look as close as he can and it's up to me to make them behave as close as they can to the real things. And I've enjoyed learning how the cars work, the physics and everything. That's all part of it as well.

Tony: People appreciate that attention to detail. That's what makes it sell. It's already getting quite a following in the games community. Already there are websites and racing leagues being set up – they've got no game yet to base any of it on, but they're all out there ready and waiting for us. That makes you feel good, that people are out there talking about it. We must be doing something right. It's nerve-wracking, though.

How much further can you push the realism in driving games? Where's left to go?

Is it a race car or a fag-sellers billboard?

Chris: We think we've got it as realistic as it's possible to get within the power limitations of the PC. Everything's modelled correctly, there's not a fudge anywhere in the game. The inertia in the cars is built up correctly from all the different masses reacting together. The engines are modelled correctly. The suspension is a true kinematic suspension. With the tyre models I've been working with Arrows, the Formula One team, helping them with their tyre models as theirs aren't running as fast as ours are. They're coming to us and asking how we're doing this and that. So that's how far it is. But you can go crazy. You can model right down to the rubber if you wanted, but at the end of the day it's not going to have any noticeable effect on the simulation.

So we've reached a peak, in other words?

Chris: Give it two years and we'll be at a stage where we can't go any further. It'll just be graphic content and the attention to detail with the stuff you put in on top of the physics. That'll be the next step, the ambience around the circuit, the pit crew and stuff like that. Real crowds, real trees...

That was what struck me most while reading about the game. That you're able to drive the cars out of the transport trucks if you want to.

Tony: People love that stuff, though. You're trying to make them completely immersed in a racing environment. When we get a racing game, all we want to do is drive off the track and down the pit lane or follow a road that leads off somewhere else. There's nothing worse than trying that and hitting an invisible wall in these things. So we decided early on that if you can see the back of the pits, then you can go down there. If you want to stick the car in the back of the truck, you can do that as well. That's what Microsoft's *Flight Sim* does, that total world thing and that's what we wanted to get across in *WSC* from the beginning. That everything's there and it all feels right. That it doesn't just feel like a game.

Why do you think we haven't yet seen an open-ended Microsoft *Flight Sim*-style engine for cars?

This monster race car can also double up as a genetically-modified crop destroyer: a perfect eco-warrior.

Chris: I really don't know. This is what we've been trying to achieve.

Tony: When flight sims started off they were always in that open style and people have just continued to develop them that way ever since. Whereas racing games stemmed primarily from the arcade and developed slowly and no one has really thought about doing what they do with flight sims. Make them more generic, more flexible. People have just kept doing the same things as everyone else. As we said, we've now got an engine that can accurately model anything with more than two wheels and drive it around.

Chris: The current rumour is that Microsoft is looking for someone to develop a car sim engine for them. So hopefully we'll beat them to it. They haven't sent us a £1 million cheque yet, so we'll get there before them. Get the people out there supporting it. We'll be the first and hopefully that will be the one that everybody follows. If we can beat them to it that'll be cool.

Take on Microsoft and win? A tall enough order even for the US government, let alone a two-man programming team from Oxford. Still, the West boys would appear to be much better armed for this particular fight than the Department of Justice were for theirs. *World Sports Cars* is one of those games that should really be garnering more coverage than it's currently getting. If it lives up to the potential, it could well be one of the finest racing games ever produced for the PC. And if their dream of a generic engine takes off, then who knows, the face of PC driving games could change forever. Here's hoping. PZ

TEAM TALK

Out with the old, in with the new, and a load of seasonal griping. If there's one thing that annoys me, it's work coming in between me and a good party

⭐ **SCROOGED** Dave Woods

Christmas. At a time of goodwill and celebration, mince pies, puddings and presents. Frosty-eyed kids rubbing their noses against window displays, parties and lashings of beer, wine and spirits. All in the name of the little baby Jesus. Sounds like a right laugh, doesn't it? Except we don't get to play ball. Instead we're chained to our desks sweating away to ensure this issue of PC ZONE

a plane with a couple of propellers and a used sick bag.

Trouble is, he connived to not only miss his plane but also ensured delays to the second by causing a flat tyre through his extreme girth, at least that's what we think happened. A spare was swiftly applied and he took to the skies in time to hook up with a taxi driver that didn't know where he was going, adding two hours. When he finally got to the developers he had time for a quick cup of tea before hurtling back into

> **"After lusting after press trips to China, Spain and Italy, Martin got his wish to go on a press trip. We sent him to sunny Manchester"**

hits the shelves in time for your post New Year celebrations. Humbug. Ahh well, there's always Easter.

And that's not the only thing that's gone wrong this month. After putting up with almost a year of constant carping, we finally allowed Martin to go on a press trip. After lusting after trips to China, Spain and Italy, Martin got his wish ("I only want to go somewhere if it involves getting on a plane") and we took advantage of the current rail situation to send him up to sunny Manchester on

the clouds for a thoroughly unpleasant journey home. Oh, how we laughed.

LIES AND CURRY HOUSES

His frantic phone calls back to the office to assure us that it was London Underground's fault were discredited by the fact that we'd seen Martin standing outside a curry house at 1am the previous evening, misty-eyed and not a little shocked at the realisation that he had to get up at five the next morning.

So, having failed this test run miserably, we decided to pack him on a gruelling whistle-stop tour of the

Korda. Late as usual.

US to glean our massive Sierra exclusive previews. There was no lounging around in designer bars on this trip, otherwise Richie or myself would have blagged it. Instead, Martin was looking at several internal flights and a gruelling schedule of US developer after US developer. What's more, he can forget about long-haul now until we've had our annual fill of sunshine, sand and sangria.

OUT WITH THE OLD...

The observant ones among you will have noticed that we've taken on a new member of staff this month. Rhianna Pratchett (now where have I heard that surname before?) has joined us as editorial assistant and has already made waves by offering to take our group publisher out in a catfight – at Age Of Empires, unfortunately.

But as one comes, another departs and it's with great sadness that I report on the passing of Chris Anderson.

Not from this mortal coil, thankfully, but from the esteemed ZONE offices. He's off to seek pastures new, which means that I've got to take charge on a full-time basis – bang goes my cushy deputy editor's job, then. Fans of the wizened druid will be pleased to hear that he's going to carry on writing for us on a regular basis.

On a brighter note, however, we finally seem to have worked out what was going wrong with the ZONE football team. A shaky start led to crushing defeat after crushing defeat, during which we resorted to old-fashioned tactics of kicking ankles and raking shins – all to no avail. Then the penny dropped into place. After slinking away last month mumbling about other commitments, we said goodbye to Tricky Dickie and our fortunes underwent a miraculous transformation. In the end-of-season tournament, we managed to depose the joint favourites

and came a respectable second in a massive Champions League consisting of three whole teams. And things don't get a whole lot better than that at this time of year – although, having said that, the sight of Steve Hill, Prezzer and Colin 'The Machine' Mackleworth dancing at the Eidos' Christmas party came very close.

And finally, before I leave the harsh reality of the year 2000 behind I should make good on a promise and mention our 'hard-working' ad girls, Emily Ford and Mandy Hewitt. Rather shamefully, I used my editorial position to wangle a bottle of champagne out of their normally-immovable purses six months ago, with the assertion that I would make mention of their undoubted prowess in Teamtalk. I didn't. And they haven't spoken to me since. Which only goes to prove that every cloud has a silver lining in the PC ZONE office. 🅿🆉

No presents for us until our work is done. Humbug!